

*washington college review*  
*a liberal arts journal*



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*washington college review*



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## *a word from the editor*

*Listen to the exhortation of the dawn!  
Look to this day!  
For it is life, the very life of life.  
In its brief course lie all the  
verities and realities of your existence:  
the bliss of growth, the glory of action,  
the splendor of beauty.*  
—Sanskrit

A framed copy of the poem inscribed above stands poised on my desk where it entreats me to live with enthusiasm that approaches abandon, clothed in bold action and beauty, and like a mirror it reflects daily the success or failure of its own exhortation. The poem, usually attributed to the great collection of Indian literature known as Sanskrit (and occasionally attributed to an unknown Sufi master of the twelfth century), shouts wisdom to its hearers. Like the feminine voice in the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, Wisdom calls out, not in the hut of the recluse, but in the streets and the square where teems life.

I am very happy to bring forward this Volume XI of the Washington College Literary Review especially because the works here teem with life. One finds in the essays, poems, and photography the experiences of our students in South Africa, Prague, Taos, Central America, and among the Navaho. We see them in art museums, at the hospital bedside and with shovels in hand in bone-chilling cold. We see their

world from the perspective of the orchard, the dinner table, and a farmhouse. We are witnesses not only to their lives, but the lives of women and men in the past who struggled to translate the course of each day into an existence with meaning. Their work exemplifies the best of a liberal arts education, as they earnestly probe those arts from mathematics to music.

I am very grateful for the dedication and commitment of the many people who have made the production of this volume both possible and a pleasure. Meredith Davies Hadaway's experience and direction have been invaluable to this publication as with so many others. I would like to thank too Jeanette Sherbondy who led the *Review* to such excellence for ten years and has generously shared her knowledge and experience with me. The editors, Katherine Cameron, Jennifer O'Neill, Katherine Moncrief, Erin Murphy, John Seidel, devoted many hours to reading all the wonderful entries and gave thoughtful consideration to each and every one. Our student editor, Rob Ranneberger, has shown again his genuine gift for design and production. Most of all I thank the Washington College students who were willing to share their lives in their work.

Janet Sorrentino

Editor, *Washington College Review*

# developing olivia

*chapter 1 of the sophie kerr award-winning novel*

LAURA MAYLENE WALTER

If asked at the moment of sleep when her lips part, she may admit what memory is still inside her. But what she can't say, not even in that one loose moment of sleep, is that it was beautiful: the backwards fall, the scattering of leaves, the wait for an ambulance.

Celia Connor stood on the second floor balcony, her palms on the railing, waiting to meet a stranger. He would be the first visitor in her new apartment. She hadn't finished unpacking but the hardwood floors were sturdy in their shine, and she'd let the fresh air come in. The town was halfway familiar but she had no friends there, and she'd left her last relationship in Central Pennsylvania more than two years ago. Something had snapped in that one, during the separation, and it became urgent to find a space of her own.

Celia looked at the ground beneath her, at the trees that moved too sharply for the weather. She wondered when he would arrive. She had a stack of negatives filled with a past he could set free. She didn't yet know what she would say to him, or the currents that would pass between them. She imagined that he, too, was driven by something he could not see. She imagined he would look at the negatives and ask: Who is she?

She is Olivia, Celia would say. My mother.

In Pennsylvania, 1989, Olivia Connor, thirty-nine years old, climbed a short ladder to gather apples from a tree. She was recently divorced and eager for the new season. She wore green gardening gloves, jeans, and a button-down shirt. The sun passed through the leaves and lighted her hair. The leaves were green and brown and yellow, and they shook lightly from her fingers. She stretched toward a high branch, wrapped her hand around an apple, and plucked it toward her.

Celia saw it all from the ground. She said it was at the exact moment the apple's stem broke from the branch when something in her mother burst. And then there was the stillness before the fall, how her mother's eyes closed, and the small, quivering space between stem and tree. The ladder fell to the ground in a wake of twigs, leaves, and bark. A spark lit between two leaves. A woman with slim hips, green gloves, the apple still in her hand. Her daughter nearby.

Celia was a hard little body standing near the tree. Strange dark-child, her hair of red, of brown. Fruit in her eye. She held that position under the tree for as long as she could. Through the leaves and the light she already knew what had been lost, what female secrets would go into the earth and never emerge to her again. Celia turned her back on the tree, but she could still see its swaying bursts of green. She turned and walked away until the years removed her from her mother, until she grew up, and until she discovered a stack of negatives and found the person who could develop Olivia.

Olivia once dashed up snowy hills, drunk. She had a friend named Eleanor Karen Bishop. She was once was the subject of dozens of photographs.

In 1987, Olivia permitted her husband's friend to photograph her as a part of a project he called "Mothers, Wives, and Shadow: A Photographic Study of the Female." Mark was steady with the camera. He didn't work with color. He mostly photographed Olivia in



the backyard and in her bedroom because, he said, the lighting was always just right in that room.

During Mark's third visit to the Connor's house, Celia walked into the bedroom and saw her mother standing with her back to the heavy crimson curtain. Olivia laughed when Celia stepped into the room. Her hair was so blond next to the red folds of fabric. When Mark told Celia she'd have to knock before interrupting a photo shoot, Celia started standing directly outside the bedroom door to hear the sounds inside. The quietness of the rest of the house allowed her to hear the mechanical turnings of the camera, the movements of cloth over her mother's skin.

Mark photographed Olivia for weeks, until he fell in love, a little, and Olivia's husband ordered a premature end to the entire project. Even after Mark was gone, Celia thought of the red curtain and her mother so pale against it. She knew Mark was photographing in black and white, but she still wished her father hadn't put an end to the pictures. Mark was catching Olivia in all the places Celia had never known before, but now the pictures would remain undeveloped and backward in their slices of light and dark. Olivia was left with sheaths of negatives in their protective carriers that she placed in the third drawer of her dresser. They remained there until the day after her funeral in 1989, when Celia went through her things and found them.

Celia placed the negatives into a box labeled "Mom" and didn't look at them until twelve years passed and she had moved into a new apartment. As she began unpacking, she started to move the box into the crawl space, but something stopped her. She hadn't looked inside that box the whole time she was living with her father, even as she grew into something she didn't understand. Some part of Celia knew what she must have lost, but since she had that one moment under the apple tree, she'd let everything else slip away.

It must have been the calm of the day or the blue in the air that made Celia open the box. She felt emotionless, strong, and unconcerned about the past. She was in her new apartment. She was twenty-

three years old, and she was learning to live entirely on her own. She started to pull the tape from the box. She hadn't had a boyfriend in two years and it felt as right as the ripping sounds she made with the tape. The tears in the cardboard did not affect her.

When she finally opened the box, she pulled out a rust-red lamp with no shade. She also found a blank notebook, unlined, and three college textbooks. A soft gray sweatshirt lay folded at the bottom of the box. Celia lifted it out but did not try it on; she was nervous for the fit. But when the sweatshirt opened its fold, a small photograph fluttered out and landed on the floor.

Celia didn't recognize the woman in the photograph at first, but then it all started to come back and she was quiet for the space that separated her from her mother. She could see London in the picture, that extravagant city holding her mother to its chest. Something of Olivia's voice came back and then vanished to the air. Celia remained kneeling in front of the box and tried to recall which memory that voice awakened in her. She remembered her mother speaking of London, those months of freedom, and the distance she crossed to come home.

The negatives were tucked between two textbooks. Celia held the first sheet up to the light and saw her mother change shape in every frame. Olivia was a dark form, her eyes and lips highlighted with a glow that allowed Celia to look straight through her. She emerged in rectangles of contrast, a collection of shades that held the air, briefly, before spiraling into shadow.

Celia held that sheet of negatives and could not put it down, not even to examine the others that lay before her. The first group was enough to shock her into another time, just sitting there on the floor of her new apartment, looking at the faces of a woman who lived until a tree shook her to the ground.

On the balcony, only a few days after she opened the box, Celia couldn't stop picturing that day in 1989. It was always this: Olivia reaching into a tree, maybe even laughing at the shaking branches

until she was in the air. The branches bothered her the most, the way they moved, the noises they made as Olivia dropped. They were almost breathing, almost laughing. She recalled the curve of her mother's extended arm and the gathering of leaves that pushed her from the ladder.

Standing on her balcony made Celia feel she could turn right to her past. She could see everything below her; she could surely reach the branches of those trees in the distance, despite their height or the way they moved with the rhythms of the day. The negatives waiting in the apartment pressed her, ghost-like, into the balcony railing. She'd placed them on the coffee table and they remained there, trapped in their plastic, breathing small gray clouds. The images reminded Celia of a time her mother told her something about love. "I loved your father," Olivia had said, "but he wasn't the first."

Celia had suspected her mother really meant London because as a girl, she listened again and again as Olivia described England, the city of London, the roughness of a beach. When Celia was eleven she asked her mother about her favorite thing in England. Olivia smiled, reached her hands up to her hair and said something that sounded like a man's name, something that seemed to be love.

What Celia remembered most about her mother's stories was the privacy of the language, how they shared things her father did not fully know. At times Celia even considered London to be part of her, the way it reached into her mother, the way it made them face each other. But Olivia's words were elusive. They worked their way into Celia through twelve years of distance and shook with the weight of a tree in Pennsylvania.

Celia could not fully escape the sunlight and the shadow of that day in 1989. What she couldn't say, not even in her one loose moment of sleep, was how the sky brought everything to brightness. The fall, the yellow leaves, an apple firm and ready for the peel. A girl of eleven with red-brown hair out to her elbows, catching sun in the sky. Twelve years changed the way Celia saw herself, but that day remained con-

stant. It was always the same for her, its lights, its breath, that shock of aneurysm pulling it all down. And suddenly Celia was twenty-three, grown into her hair and breasts, and found herself wondering what to do with recipes, and her mother's wedding gown, and men.

And men. A woman like Celia looked sideways out of her face because of them.

Stephen walked close to the building, stopped, and looked up. The sun fell on only half his face. "Celia?" he called, but she didn't know yet. She didn't know the black and white face that would follow them in their sleep for months. She didn't know the sour smells or the landscapes that would overpower Stephen, bringing him closer to her. All Celia could see was a dark-skinned man standing with his face half in, half out of the sun.

Celia stared down from the balcony. At twenty-three, she grew her hair wild, a deep barky color sprawling about her. She appeared to be a woman who had grown from something solid, but the way Stephen looked at her snapped her back into the past. It was his expression, the way he moved his neck to take her in. Despite the distance, Celia recognized that expression. He was Mark, he was Ted, he was all the others Celia never knew but sensed, their breath on her mother's skin, the way Olivia gathered and kept them inside. For a moment Celia felt her body turning black and white with history, her hair blond, her arms reaching to harvest fruit.

She stood against the railing, unable to say anything to Stephen. His look made Celia search her own body for pieces of her mother. How was Olivia able to stand so beautifully against a crimson curtain when her hair pulled all the brightness from the room? And there was something about London, the intangible presence of a man who perhaps contained a part of Olivia. Celia was suddenly surrounded by her mother's men, the way they attached themselves so permanently, the way they now caught Celia instead.

"Are you Celia Connor?" Stephen asked. Her name leaving his

throat matched the sun, all red and fire, and something invisible passed between them. Somewhere in the space was Celia's image of Olivia and the shaking. A snap and a fall. What Celia couldn't say was that it had been beautiful, yes, the sunlight, the texture of leaves. Olivia's hair, her skin, her hand reaching upward until she fell.

Olivia. This woman who came to pass and leave behind her a girl gazing down from a balcony, a young man peering up.







Sharon Revett  
*Still Life*  
Oil on canvas





## a voice of generations

JAIME LANG

**T**he enchanted house of my youth was a one-hundred year old farmhouse, facing an open field and surrounded by deep woods, a land still untouched by the city lights of Baltimore and Annapolis which were only twenty miles away. In the summer, my great-grandmother, Eileen Listman (whom I knew as Mimi), would sit beside me on the old wooden rocking bench when the pink dogwood was still in bloom and she would tell me stories. I listened to nursery rhymes, fables, and songs, and to the distant humming of a tractor on which my great-grandfather, Albert Listman, would smile and wave while passing before us on the two acre field that ended by Truck House Road.

In the evening, inside the white house with ivy- green shutters, my family would gather in the kitchen, circling round Albert as he played the guitar. Mimi stood by the oven, kneading dough for apple strudel while listening to her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren sing American folk songs, such as Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo' and Little Brown Jug, and even a few German folk songs, their words tripping over my tongue as I sang:

*Ist das nicht ein Schnitzelbank? Hochzeit Ring ein Schnitzelbank...  
Hochzeit Ring, Grosses Glas, Hin und Her, Kurz und Lang ...  
Ja das ist eine, Ja das ist eine, Ja das ist eine Schnitzelbank.*

These words were rich and strange. Their mysterious melody lingered on my tongue, casting a spell over me. I became another person, in another time, in another land; but I was always at home. At home, during those summer days, where time stood still, where moments seemed like days and days seemed like moments, I dreamt that summer would never end. I dreamt that this place— a place where trees still whispered secrets, where squirrels still ate from your hand, and where blackberry patches still ran wild, free for the picking, their juice staining your lips purple and leaving a tangy-sweet taste on your tongue— was under an everlasting spell.

As the years passed I began to awaken from this childhood dream, but the vision must have really shattered when my grandmother, Eileen Mayo, said—“Well, me and Buster and Bobby decided to sell the house. It’s falling apart around me and we can’t fix it up and they need the money from it just as much as I do.” I couldn’t believe it. They couldn’t sell this place, how could they? All the family grew up here, it was our home. I told my grandmother, who lived in the house after my great-grandparents’ deaths, that Albert and Mimi wouldn’t want her to sell it. But she just looked at me, her blue eyes smiling, sadly. I was sixteen then, but the telling of my family’s story and the tone of my grandmother’s voice still resound.

She began, “Albert’s parents didn’t just build this house, they helped build the community. The community was their home. All the families helped each other through the worst times.” As she continued to tell me the story, the history, of the enchanted house, I began to learn the true power and meaning of the spell.

Ludwig Listmann was the name of my great-great grandfather. He was born in Frankfurt, Germany, where he met his wife, Caroline Feuarhardt, who had been born in St. Petersburg, Russia. They married in Germany, then moved to the United States in 1900, settling in the once densely wooded, scarcely populated, Severna Park, Maryland, in the southern part of Anne Arundel County. For one hundred dollars Ludwig bought fifteen acres of land, mostly woods, but there

were already apple orchards and blackberry patches, nestled behind a rolling sea of grass. A four-room home was built a half-mile from their nearest neighbor, but would soon become a two-story farm house holding fourteen children by 1914. When first built, there were two rooms downstairs, and two rooms upstairs. The outhouse and the kitchen were separate from the house, whose sitting room door opened to a few steps that led to a short path towards the kitchen, only a few yards away. As the children were born—Fred, George, Louise, “Coonie,” Eddie, John, Willie, Henry, “Otts,” Birtha, Albert (who was the youngest of the fourteen), and three others who died as children (one who fell down the stairs and broke her neck, one who drowned in the well, and one of spring fever)—the family began to develop a history of triumphs and tragedies, and the house began to grow.

The Listmans connected the downstairs sitting room to the kitchen, and built two additional bedrooms upstairs. Fourteen children shared three bedrooms. Albert used to tell me that the bedroom I slept in, when I stayed overnight, was once his room, and that he used to share a bed with four other brothers; he even shared his brother’s shoes. Then, it only had a bed, a washbasin, and a closet. But there was a lot of sunlight because there were three windows, so the brothers could wake up to the sunrise and look to the fishing pond beyond the woods full of the squirrel and fox they hunted, to the orchards and gardens they tended, and to the chickens they fed. Through the years, this room became my grandmother’s room, my mother’s room, my aunt’s room, and finally, my room. When I lived there, I slept on a bed of white sateen sheets above a white braided rug lying over a dark wood floor, where in one corner stood a dresser with Albert’s old washbasin on it (which wasn’t used), and in the other corner stood Albert’s closet, painted white. The walls were a light blue; the room was a room of light. From the center window I could see the old oak tree that was hundreds of years old, that had grown so tall that it seemed to reach the clouds. From the strongest and lowest branch, which was not very low, hung a long rope tied to a tractor tire. During summer days, like

my mother and her cousins before me, my cousins and I would play on this tire-swing for hours, until Mimi called us from the porch window, waving us to come inside for lunch.

The kitchen was a magical place. When first stepping through a cream-colored doorway, there was a little hill (where the steps used to be) of worn red-orange tile that curved downward towards the old rocking chair that faced the wooden candy cabinet, where Mimi used to hide candy just for me—it was our secret. On the other side of the chair was the cherry-wood cabinet with glass doors through which one could see the rose-spray tea-set and the ceramic pots that said, “flour,” “sugar,” “salt,” “tea,” and “coffee.” This was the “antique” cabinet; it held many valuable furnishings that Ludwig, Caroline, and their children collected through the years. There was Albert’s first baby spoon, his brother John’s special cup, my grandmother’s first baby shoe that was bronzed.

While the Listmans home began to grow and develop history, so did their community. Shortly after Ludwig’s eighth child was born, he donated a piece of land to the county government so a road, Truck House Road, could be built to improve transportation to the new Baltimore, Annapolis, and Washington Railroad. Today the road is the B&A Bike Trail, and also the B&A Museum, where Albert donated old farming and welding equipment that is now considered antique. “Although our family donated land, the family who owned property across from Grandpop Listman did not want to donate or sell theirs,” my grandmother told me. “But Grandpop Listman believed in better means of travel. He believed in expanding possibilities, in future progress.” While some local families rejected “progress,” my family welcomed it; Ludwig wanted to expand the community. Being an immigrant once himself, he welcomed all newcomers who wished to make a home for themselves on land near the city of Baltimore and the rural Cheseapeake. A few years after donating land to the government, Ludwig sold more—land on which the Listmans closest neighbors and dearest friends, the Shirokys (whom I would later know as

Mr. Joe and Mrs. Kay) would build their home, and land on which a church, a community, and my elementary school, Oak Hill, would be built. My great-great grandfather was one of many who helped pave the way for Severna Park's future. His belief in progress was not only beneficial for stabilizing the community, but also for stabilizing the family, for it was the automobile that helped my family earn money during Prohibition, and it was the new railroad that kept my family in business during the Depression.

Like many other families in the southern part of Anne Arundel County during World War II and after the war, every able body was expected to contribute. A few of Albert's brother's contributed by becoming American soldiers. George fought in World War II and Fred fought in both World War I and World War II; he is listed on the State Capitol Wall as one of the first one-hundred to enlist in World War I. They fought against the Germans, perhaps people who would have been their neighbors or relatives had Ludwig not decided to settle in America. However, the entire family, especially Ludwig, a born German, was (in terms of war) anti-German; "he wanted to be considered American," my grandmother told me. Albert also wanted to fight, but his weak heart wouldn't permit it. Because his brothers who went to war began their own families when they returned, and because his other brothers, Otts and Henry, worked at the shipyard, Albert left school to fulfill their duties and replace their income, receiving no more than a third grade education. The land became his teacher.

Every week day he would drive his father along Truck House Road, still a wide dirt lane surrounded by oaks and pines, to drop him off at the B, A&W train station. While his father went to work in Annapolis, tailoring the Naval Academy's midshipmen uniforms, Albert stayed home to tend the vegetables and apple orchards, to milk the cow, and feed the chickens. He would sell milk to the local neighbors, and during the winter when crops were out of season, he would hunt rabbit and squirrel in the surrounding woods. "Even when I was young," my grandmother told me, "we didn't throw anything away. We made

apple pudding from the apples and sold the milk from the cow and made the squirrel and rabbit into stews. Mimi even made my dresses out of the floral print bags the chicken feed came in. We lived off the land.” Although living off the land wasn’t as necessary when I lived at the house, I would still wander, with basket in arm, down the graveled lane and through paths in the woods to find wild blackberry patches. I would pick some, and eat some, and when my basket was full I would return to the house, with wine-colored lips and face, and help my great-grandmother make blackberry tarts. Together, we would flour the kitchen table, knead the dough, and form crusts that we filled to the brim with blackberries; the taste of warm, sweet-tart was rich, strange, like the German folk songs that left me in wonder. Albert’s sisters, BIRTHA and LOUISE, used to bake with their mother, CAROLINE, during the winters and summers, while Albert would bring them all necessary ingredients: squirrels, eggs, vegetables, and he would often have to borrow flour and milk from neighbors when needed.

In the late 1920s, living off the land still wasn’t enough for clothes and other daily necessities of a large family. A few of Albert’s older brothers, COONIE, HENRY, and JOHN, who remained in the Severna Park area during and after World War I, used the Prohibition Amendment to the family’s economic advantage. They were whiskey runners, bootleggers. Although there were many residents in the county who chose to observe Prohibition and remain “dry,” there were many other families that profited illegally. According to former Annapolis Mayor Robert Campbell, “Bootlegging was an honorable profession then. It was a casual kind of bootlegging, winked at by law enforcement. It reflected the easy pace of life in Anne Arundel County during the 1920s.”<sup>1</sup> As a new “honorable profession,” the “Listman boys” would run the neighbors whiskey, cooked up in stills hidden in the woods. They made special tanks in the trunks of their new automobiles to transport and sell it to local saloons, which were illegal, called “speakeasies.” The neighbors would pay them a share of their profit. “All profited in some way,” my grandmother told me, “if one family needed some-

thing, the other would give it. Everyone was one family.” During Christmas time, many of the neighbors would celebrate the season at the Listman house. There would be music, singing, dancing, and, of course, a specialty drink, which Albert used to make during Christmas when I was young, which I knew as “Albert’s Eggnog.” My mother would never let me have any, but after she drank a few cups and wasn’t looking, Albert would sneak me a glass and wink. Recently, my grandmother gave me the recipe. It’s a secret, so I can’t tell all, but some of the ingredients are homemade eggnog, eggnog ice cream, peach liquor, a lot of whiskey, and a lot of brandy.

My uncle, Coonie Listman, besides specializing in the “honorable profession” of bootlegging, founded Listman’s General Store in 1921, the one of the first general stores in the Severna Park area, which is still open today. Many of the neighbors gathered there to socialize, and products were bought there on credit. “It was a matter of trust, of understanding,” my grandmother said, “the community was building, and each person depended on each other so progress could happen.” As “one family,” the neighbors of Truck House Road began the first Volunteer Fire Department in 1923. The fathers and sons of the families would take turns volunteering. Although the Listmans’ nearest neighbors were Roman Catholic and Jewish, with different ethnicities and religions, they were able to work together, developing strong friendships and a strong community.

For social occasions, the families would sometimes hold dances at the fire hall or host card games at their houses; neighbors would visit each other regularly. My grandmother remembers such occasions: “I was a young girl then. I would sit in the old wooden rocking chair in the smoke-filled kitchen and listen to Albert, Coonie, and John speak German and laugh heavily while playing cards, smoking cigars, and drinking whiskey before the dance. But when non-German neighbors were there, Albert and his brothers would never speak German. Then I would listen to Mimi and the neighbor’s wives who were in the sitting room, wearing beautiful dancing dresses I used to admire.

They would laugh lightly, and whisper about the men.”

These men and women of the Severna Park community developed their identity together. No longer were they solely German, Italian, or Russian; they were becoming American. Albert’s older brother, Adolf, when going to work for the shipyard during the war had to Americanize his name, changing it to Otts. Ludwig then decided that before his sons joined the American Army, he would change the family name by eliminating one “n.” When I asked my grandmother the reason, she told me they didn’t want to be considered German; they were American. My ancestors literally extracted a part of their German history in order to fuse with the “Melting Pot” of American culture. Yet, this assimilation was only on the surface: the invisible letter was uttered within the home where they spoke their native tongue, singing hymns like “Ein Pilger und ein Fremder ... A Pilgrim and a Stranger.” These were played at the Christ Lutheran Church, founded in 1908, and whose first services were held in German for local German families.

Perhaps it was the interdependent community which allowed my family and other local families to maintain an “easy pace of life” during the Depression in the 1930s. “What one family lacked the other supplied,” my grandmother continued, “and because the community was building and progress was happening, people were provided with jobs by the railroad as well as the Naval Academy. Many people in Anne Arundel County did not experience the full impact of the Depression.” Because Ludwig Listman was a tailor, making uniforms for the Naval Academy’s midshipmen in Annapolis, my family’s main source of income was not affected.

Also, Albert had become a welder in 1931, and was earning a good living. Five years later he married my great-grandmother, Eileen Zang, who had been the little blue-eyed girl he walked to school and brought milk to in exchange for flour and a smile. Now, at ages twenty-two and seventeen, the newlyweds would move to Baltimore County, only to return in 1942, to inherit the land and farmhouse of their



youth, to raise a family, and to take care of Albert's parents during their retirement. Albert soon began his own Sand and Gravel, Hauling and Excavating Business, and assisted in graveling Truck House Road, paving the old dirt lane for the dozens of cars that would bring new neighbors who built homes between the shady oaks and pines. Although my great-great grandfather donated land for the sake of "progress," he never drove on the road himself. He looked to the future, but remained in the past, content to watch his sons help build the road and help shape the community.

Albert's sons, too, helped shape the community. My grandmother's brothers, "Buster" and "Bobby," as well as her husband Don, all worked for Albert's business. Like their parents, Buster, Bobby, and Eileen all married young, at ages eighteen, twenty, and nineteen, and also like their parents, they believed in the progress of their community and their country. My grandmother was one of the first women Marines; my uncle Bobby would also join the Marines, and my uncle Buster would join the Air Force. Many of their sons and daughters, including my mom's siblings, would join the American forces. And today, many of their children, my cousins, are a part of the American forces, fighting in another American war.

While a few of my cousins are in the midst of battle, I am far away from such a scene, but I am contributing to my family and my community in another way. My great-great-grandfather believed in progress because, like many parents, he believed in a better future for his children. Albert and Mimi wanted for their children a better education than they received. They were hard workers, but they recognized the importance of education. My mother was the first person in my family to go to college, and now I am the second. They think I will be the writer. And before my great-grandmother died, in the house where she bore her first child, where Albert's brothers and sisters were born, and where some of them died, where the echoes of crying and laughter resound in the fading white walls, she held my hand, her fingers that kneaded dough next to mine, once so strong, seemed so frail,

and she told me to write about “home.” That was her last word, the family circling round to try and understand her whisper, my uncle Buster crying next to his mother, perhaps remembering the little boy he was and how she used to stroke his head and sing to him when he was small, her last whisper that still echoes in my mind—“home.”

Today, on the once densely wooded ten acres where the apple orchard and dogwood blossomed, roads have been cut and paved, children play soccer on these streets and high school kids sneak to the lonely strip of wood that remains to play drinking and love games. Perhaps they do not see the house beyond, fading to gray and sagging, knowing that it will soon be buried beneath the open field where the distant humming of a tractor was heard and where stories were told. My enchanted home will disappear, and in its place will be driveways leading to four car garages, attached to symmetrical houses that will each look the same. “But you see,” my grandmother said, ending her tale, “each of those houses will have their own story. Albert would have sold the land. The home is our history, and we’ll always have that, as long as we continue the telling.”



## ENDNOTES

1. From the Maryland Archive Anne Arundel County History.  
[www.bladenews.com/hist\\_aal\\_roaring.html](http://www.bladenews.com/hist_aal_roaring.html).





Robyn Nuttall  
*Morning Light*  
Gelatin silver print



# memory lapse

They say  
my sister fell in  
Kansas City, we were  
visiting our family, we were  
visiting the zoo, our cousins  
racing ahead of us but Jana  
lagged behind.  
And my uncle said to my mother, his sister  
*my mother, his sister*, “Marcie,  
*Marcie*, you shouldn’t let her fall behind, you always  
baby her,  
*don’t baby her*,” but then she fell  
fainted?  
*deliberate?*  
onto the ground, and we rushed her  
home, to Baltimore, and she was  
diagnosed, stayed in the  
hospital for 7 days,  
7 days, and she remembers  
it, the needles and IVs running like  
rivers, like a branding of  
*diabetes* on her pancreas, she was  
2, and she  
remembers  
how the disease suddenly started her  
life, blood tests and insulin shots and  
what’s that thing called?

*urine strips? for blood sugar?*

I could never remember  
*remember* what other people asked  
daily, “why do you  
prick yourself with that  
needle? What does it mean,  
*mean?*” And they ask me,  
*me*, “when did she get  
it?” and I stare ahead, lapsing,  
ashamed?  
*sick of it?*

*Do I even remember?* I remember the  
pump, her getting the pump  
in 1999, I was  
sixteen by then and I came to the  
hospital, where she was bedridden again  
*again?* and my naturally, mother stayed with her  
*again?* but I just came after school  
watching her  
anxious and scared on the  
bed, by now a faithful  
pilgrimage—*will the*  
pump ease her burden  
*a little?* And I tried to  
remember—*was it like this*  
*before?* And I stretched back my  
mind, tried to stretch back to when she was  
two, and I was  
four, back to the zoo.

But I couldn't; couldn't get past the  
fact that; my sister fell in Kansas City,  
they said.

RACHEL MAURO



# stranger to myself

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*the life-long effects of a traumatic brain surgery*

LEAH LITTLEFIELD

**T**his is what I remember: It was December 23, 2000. I was home for Christmas break during my freshman year of college.

This is what I was told: Three of my high school friends and I set out to do some last-minute shopping. I was riding in the front passenger seat and leaned over to tie my new grey and blue Nike sneakers. That's when my friend who was driving ran a stop sign at an intersection. We hit another car head on, and then plowed into a tree. The driver of the other car died three days later, and the passenger seat of our car, where I was sitting, was crushed. The entire left side of my head was cut open. The police saw the extent of my injury and considered me a fatality, which is the first news they gave my family. Because I had a pulse, I was flown to shock trauma anyway. I had to be told all of this because the last thing I remember was walking out of the door of my parents' home that morning. I don't remember the accident or much of anything else that happened in the month that followed.

I later learned that the woman who had lived next door to my family for eight years was the nurse who took me off the helicopter at shock trauma. She recognized me and called my house. She left a message for my parents telling them I was alive. She knew that the neurosurgeon was in the hospital at the time and so she was able to

have me seen immediately. In another strange coincidence, the nurse in charge of the intensive care unit where I was later placed was the mother of a girl from my high school. And finally, the MRI technician was the brother of very good family friends. It must have seemed to my family that we were getting blessings from everywhere.

When I arrived in shock trauma I was in a coma, and after receiving emergency treatment for my head, I was put on life support, where I remained through Christmas Day. My vital signs were stable but I had no brain activity. It was very possible that my brain could hemorrhage at any moment. I had little chance of survival. The wound on my head went from the hairline on the left side of my face and wrapped around to the back of my head, and was much too severe for stitches. It could be closed only by fifty staples. A drain was also put into my head to avoid too much fluid building up under the skull. On Christmas Day, I came out of my coma, only for a moment, but long enough to give hope to my family and the doctors. However, the doctors had more bad news—my pupils were completely dilated, which is often a sign of permanent brain damage. It would be days before that would be established.

During my stay in the hospital I underwent numerous tests daily. I had CAT scans, MRIs, IVs, and a spinal tap. They found that I had severe nerve damage to my left eye which was causing the dilation of my pupils. Fortunately, I had no permanent brain damage, but my short-term memory was completely gone. I could not remember things that happened five minutes earlier. I could give people directions to my house and remember phone numbers, but things like elementary math were almost impossible for me to do on my own. My brain was so damaged that I was like a child. And thus began a long road to recovery.

I had suffered a closed-head brain injury, which occurs when there is a severe blow to the head; it is most common in car accidents. There is often a period of unconsciousness following the trauma, which could last anywhere from a few minutes to a few months. We are

more fortunate than people in the past because the technology we have now allows us to know more than ever about brain injuries. When I was in the hospital there were machines hooked up to my head that could monitor my brain activity. And finally, they were able to “drain” my brain and prevent any fluid from building up under my skull. These technologies make diagnosis and rehabilitation much easier.

Once released from the hospital, which was far too early in my opinion, I was not able to do much of anything. I slept about twenty hours a day, was very agitated and confused, and could not remember anything. For example, I wanted to talk to a friend and so I called, but there was no answer. Minutes later I forgot that I had called and called again. They had caller ID and saw that I proceeded to call about 15 times in a row, all within no more than a half hour. It is embarrassing now, but at the time I had absolutely no recollection of calling just minutes before.

In early 2001 I began neuro-rehabilitation, where I went for six hours a day, five days a week. There, I met with an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a speech therapist, and a therapist who specialized in traumatic events. It was very scary for me because I was dropped off with these people everyday and I just wanted to be at home. For two months I struggled to do things that a third grader would have found to be easy tasks. It’s like being underwater and looking up to see the surface just inches from your face, yet you can’t quite make it there. That is the first thing I really remember, and I remember it like it was yesterday.

For so many days I felt as though I was in a fog, I thought I was dreaming, and I just spoke to the therapist about what I was going to do when morning came and the dream was over. And then one day I thought to myself—*you only dream things you know or that you have seen. But I have never met these therapists and patients before so I could not possibly be dreaming about them.* That was what made me realize I was not dreaming, and then I suddenly “woke up.” When I arrived in February, I was given a test to measure my mental capability, and that test

showed that I was only in the 10th percentile. But two months later, on my last day, I took the test again and I had shot up to the 90th percentile of mental capability.

I still had memory problems, but I would overcome that and regain a normal life. The therapists said they had never had a patient excel so rapidly. When I told the therapists that my goal was to return to school that fall, just six months later, they were supportive but told my parents I would not be able to return until at least the fall of 2002, a year and a half later. But I was determined to go back for my sophomore year. When they saw the rate of my progress they were not so sure that I would have to wait an extra year and they began to gear my rehab towards school activities.

Rehab therapists have patients with many obstacles to overcome. Many of their patients are confused and agitated. I went to rehab with traumatic brain injury victims, but also with elderly people who had suffered strokes. Some of them were extremely irritable and extremely snappy with the therapists. The therapists were wonderful people, but when patients enter a neuro-rehabilitation they usually are not quite sure of what's going on, and so they take out their frustrations on the people they are with all day – the therapists. As one doctor says:

*In a moment their lives change dramatically. With a severe brain injury, an individual goes from being independent to being dependent, from being capable to being incapable. It is compounded by the fact that they cannot even remember what is happening. They wake up and everything is different. What they can remember is being like they used to be; independent, driving, doing things, and going to work. All of a sudden people are telling them "You can't do that! You can't get up and walk right now because you'll fall. No, you can't go to the bathroom on your own. No, you can't do this and no you can't do that." What do you think their response is? Anger and frustration is understandable. People with TBI know what they want to do, they can see it, but they can't do it. They are*

*constantly confronted with frustrations, roadblocks, and hurdles. Put yourself in this position and you can understand the depression, the anxiety, the irritation, and the bitterness that can occur after head injury.<sup>1</sup>*

The first emotional stage in the recovery process is known as the confusion/agitation phase. This can last just minutes or for months. When in this stage, patients become aware of their situation and realize they cannot do things on their own, which leads to great confusion. Out of this confusion comes agitation because the patient is being touched and monitored all the time and is often in great pain. This is especially prevalent for those who require hospitalization. When they become aware of their surroundings, there is complete confusion, which leads to agitation. When I was in the hospital, I had to have my legs tied down because I was kicking so hard, which was an unconscious impulse. Once I was home I was agitated all the time; I did not know what was going on and I could not understand why people were fussing over me so much. One day while reading through the daily journal I was required to keep, I read various entries in which I expressed my agitation at my family and the doctors because they kept touching me and asking if I was ok, but I just wanted to sleep.

The second emotional stage is denial. Immediately following the injury, most victims go through a “there’s nothing wrong with me” stage. But even when patients are allowed to go home, they find themselves doing silly things or forgetting simple things, and the more that happens, the harder it is to deny. There are two types of denial. The first is emotional denial. The injury may have been caused by something that is just too terrible or frightening to face. And the second type of denial comes directly from the brain. The brain literally refuses to process certain information. I denied that anything had happened to me, and, for a short time when I returned home, I felt there was absolutely nothing wrong with me. The only thing I wanted to do

was go back to school and drive. I felt there was no reason that I should not be able to return full-time to college and I denied that I had any impairments, when in reality I could not have survived for an hour without my family near me.

The third stage, following denial, is anger and depression. Eventually, as the problem persists and begins to impact everyday life, denial becomes impossible. It is at this point that the victim realizes that head injury problems are not just going to “go away.” For patients, the realization that they are different and can no longer do the things that they used to do leads to depression and anger. Because I was going to have to take a semester off from school, I started working in the office of my high school; they offered the job to me to get me out of the house. It was nothing complicated, just office work. This began my third phase, and I have never felt so angry and depressed. I had just graduated and I was supposed to be in college like all my friends, and instead I was right back in high school. I think the lowest point was when friends from my high school class came in to visit our old teachers and me over spring break. They were all talking about their colleges and I had no stories to tell.

The next phase, which is said to be the most emotionally painful, is known as the testing phase. Much like a young child tests his or her limits, TBI survivors also begin to retest their limits. They might begin to feel even the slightest bit like their old selves and so they try to resume normal activities. It is during this phase that they “forget” their new limitations. For example, a very common result of a TBI is a fatigue disorder, which causes the person to get tired very easily. If one is tired, then any problem such as vision trouble or memory loss, becomes magnified. During this phase, however, one might try and continue their customary habits from before the injury.

In this phase, I constantly pushed my limits. I insisted on driving again, even if it was minimally. And I tried hard to stay up late as I used to. And by that March, I convinced my parents to let me come back to

college and spend a night from time to time. Thinking back, I think that was the worst thing I could have asked for because I simply was not ready to do anything like that. The college lifestyle is exactly the opposite kind of lifestyle I was supposed to be living at that time, but I so badly wanted to be normal that I ignored everything my body was “telling me.” And if someone told me I was not ready, I would not have listened because I refused to believe it.

The final stage of emotional recovery is the uneasy acceptance stage. This is when the head-injured person learns where he/she stands and what his/her limits are, and actually begins to accept them. It is not embraced warmly, but it is accepted because the person realizes that he/she cannot function the way that they used to in the past. Furthermore, the individual often begins to use words like the “old” me and the “new” me. It is emotionally draining because you are meeting a stranger, yet that stranger is yourself and you are often uncomfortable “in your own skin.” You must develop a totally new self-concept, which is difficult to do when you do not understand why you do not feel like the same person you worked hard to become. It is a hard adjustment to make, to accept that you cannot live the way that you remember yourself living, but it starts to become necessary.

I reached the uneasy acceptance phase when I returned to Washington College as a junior. I was able to come back in the fall of 2001 as a sophomore, but I was still going through the denial phase then. I did not see that at the time, but it is obvious to me now when I look back on it. It had not even been an entire year since my accident. I constantly pushed my limits and was determined to return to my normal self. I was tired all the time, which made it almost impossible to remember new information, and the nerve damage in my left eye was magnified when I became tired. Inside I wanted to go home and sleep in my own bed and be with my family, but I could not admit that because I had pushed so hard to get back to school. I would have felt like a failure if I would have admitted that. This year I have learned

to listen to my body: I don't go out as much as I used to; I go home a lot; and I am no longer trying to force myself to become who I once was. I know when I need to sleep and I have learned how to compensate for my memory problems and my vision trouble. When I am tired I get overwhelmed very easily and I can barely remember new information. Unfortunately I am not as "fun" as I used to be, but now I am doing what is best for me.

Poor initiative and anxiety are common results of these complex emotional stages. Poor initiative can often be confused with depression. Researchers say these patients will sit quietly and contentedly. If directed or persuaded to do something unfamiliar they will do it, but without certainty or confidence. They are often uncharacteristically dependent on others. When I was in high school, I was always the initiator of the group. I was even chosen to be the reunion coordinator for my class in the future. But now, I am completely content to stay in, and sometimes actually prefer it. Unless others really persuade me to go somewhere, I will usually not go out. And unlike before, I am completely content to sit quietly. As my parents point out, I will do something if someone else convinces me to do it, or if someone else with whom I feel comfortable is doing it with me, but I will rarely start something on my own.

Three common triggers of anxiety are: riding in a vehicle in heavy traffic, being in crowds, and being around small children. Once I was released from the hospital, I was very anxious about leaving the house. If I did have to go out, I was very quiet and shy. My parents took me to a movie after I was released from the hospital to try to get me to do something that I normally loved to do, but it was one of the scariest and strangest experiences of my life. For the first time, I was terrified to be in a big crowd like that. Rehab therapists know this happens and so they intentionally took a group of us to crowded places. We went to the mall, to downtown Annapolis, to a restaurant, and to the grocery store. Eventually, I became more comfortable, but even today I still feel uneasy at times in heavy traffic or large groups of people.



Severe head injuries affect the memory most severely. Individuals with a TBI often have fairly good recall of information about events that occurred prior to the injury, which is already in the memory banks and does not go anywhere. But the problem lies in remembering new information. Think of it as trying to pour water into a cup that is already full. The new information spills right back out. The injury severely interferes with the ability to retrieve new information. TBI survivors can recall words to songs they knew before, but cannot say what happened five minutes earlier. Retention of new information is usually the most serious deficit experienced by TBI patients. This makes it very difficult to return to school or work successfully.

Doctors would give me “quizzes” while I was in the hospital to see if my memory was getting any better, and I could never recall the new information. Yet I was able to give people directions to my house, give my parents any telephone numbers of friends that they needed to call, and words to songs I knew five years before. However, if the doctor gave me three words to remember (such as tree, monument and drawing), which he often did, I usually couldn’t remember any of them.

The TBI affects not only the victim but also the family and loved ones of the victim. I know from experience that it is amazingly frustrating for the family because they see a person who just days or weeks ago was normal and full of life, and now is dependent upon them for every need. At eighteen years old I had to be bathed and reminded to eat. I walked with a walker and slept for at least 20 hours a day. Most loved ones, even after spending every day with the patient in the hospital, do not understand the drastic changes that have occurred in the victim and, as some say, the person everyone knew before the injury did not survive.

I feel that my recovery was harder for my family than it was for me. I remember very little about the entire process. I have little, if any, memories from the time of the accident to the time I began rehab. Because my bedroom was upstairs I had to sleep on the pullout couch

on the ground level of my house. Someone slept with me every night in case I needed to get up and walk, and someone had to bathe me to prevent me from falling in the tub. At that point, just a slight bump on my head would have been disastrous. At times it seemed that the easiest thing to do would be to stay in the house and never come out again.

The family, more than anyone, really wants to see that person, who has already been through so much, return to being the person he/she was before. I know that was and still is the case in my family. This excerpt, from “TBI Facts and Stats”, written for parents and caregivers, gives information on the way loved ones handle the old and new selves:

*You survived the physician telling you that she would not live through the night. You survived waiting for her to wake up from a coma (and being told that if she did, she might be a vegetable). In the rehab center you watched her struggle to relearn the simple things we all take for granted...walking, eating, bathing... You'd do whatever it took to make her like she was before... There are times when you see a glimmer of the person you used to know: that wry sense of humor, the winning smile, maybe she even remembers an incident from before the accident. Other times she is an unlikable stranger masquerading in the body of the person you knew. She has angry outbursts, repeats the same stories, asks the same questions, and forgets things from one moment to the next.<sup>2</sup>*

This is so similar to what my family went through that it gives me chills when I read it. Not only is it a struggle for the survivor to find his or her self, but those close to the survivor also struggle to find the person they once knew.

Many behavioral changes occur after a TBI, and unfortunately these are least understood of all TBI effects. An individual who was previously laid back and nice suddenly transforms into someone who

is aggressive, disruptive, and hard to get along with. These changes are not the result of a conscious effort. I feel that I am more irritable and emotional than I used to be. Sometimes when I get mad, I feel guilty afterwards because I do not remember exactly why I got mad. Many friends who came to visit me right after the accident have commented on how different I was then: much more irritable and somewhat mean to people, not all the time but every now and then. Luckily, that stopped within a few weeks.

There are the emotional stages, the behavioral changes, the memory problems, and the vision problems, but the hardest part of recovering, from my perspective, is the task of managing your “old” self and your “new” self. TBI is a lifelong trauma. The initial damage is not the only damage, and usually what follows is harder. It is a daily struggle of finding yourself. You are aware the person we used to be existed “somewhere,” but you know that is not you anymore. You know that you “are physically the same person... you look the same... but somehow deep inside you know that you are not the same person you once knew. This is one of the hardest struggles we will have to make in our lives.”<sup>3</sup>

A neuro-psychologist said, “The loss of self is often the real tragedy of a TBI. It is seldom addressed by the medical profession, and yet it is a loss so profound that many may never recover from it. Brain injury strips away a lifetime of learning, of personal identity, and of personal power.” In an excerpt from the book *Out of My Mind*, the author, Dan Windheim, touches on frustrations shared by many survivors of traumatic brain injuries. He says it is “the Why Me? Syndrome, the sense of being cheated out of life.” Sometimes, he says, “I would like to go back to my old life... when I had the world by its tail.”<sup>4</sup>

TBI is a common injury. It is also a lifelong injury that has an effect on everything I do and can become in the future. There are therapists and support groups designed to help with recovery, but the majority of recovery must be done by the individual alone. As much

as people wanted to help me, most of my recovery had to be done within myself. Doctors say they have patients who have no scars, look just like they used to, and yet they are different. The problem is that people do not understand the change because it is internal and there are no visible differences.

As a brain injury survivor, I cannot stress this enough. Because there are no visible reminders, people tend to forget it even happened. And yet I feel that it has changed me, and is continuing to change me, more than I could have imagined. My accident took place my freshman year of college. It was my first time out on my own, I was 18 and having the time of my life. Suddenly, in a matter of minutes, my life was changed forever and I didn't even know it had happened. Unfortunately, it did not fit into my "college plans" and so I was adamant about returning to the "old me." But now I have accepted that it is not me anymore. I don't talk about it often, but I have changed so much that it still surprises me at times.

As the days pass, the "new me" becomes more apparent. I often feel guilty admitting this because I know my family and friends want me to be the way I was, and they do not understand why I am no longer that person. It is nothing visible, but I can feel it. There are times when I almost wish there was a visible scar to remind people that less than three years ago I was barely holding onto life. Then they might understand why I am different now. But my hair completely covers my scar where fifty staples had been, my eye is better and now looks normal and I have no more bruises or cuts. It is easy for people to forget about it altogether, and yet now is when the changes are most profound.

As I was recovering, it was comforting to learn that traumatic brain injuries were very prevalent. Severe head injuries, or Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs), are more common in the United States than many people are aware. There are about two million traumatic brain injuries in the U.S. each year; they account for an estimated 34% of all

injury deaths in the U.S.; and roughly 62 of every 100,000 adults over the age of fifteen are living in their community with a TBI.<sup>5</sup> Not only that, but many people know very little information about brain injuries and the life-altering effects they have on the victim.

I was lucky in so many ways and I recovered more quickly than any of the therapists predicted that I would. I returned to school an entire year early and I have made the Dean's List twice in the last three semesters that I have been back. I even played on the softball team last year. I recently became engaged to a man whom I had been dating for just four months at the time of the accident. He stuck by me and has supported me unconditionally throughout my recovery process. I am also preparing for the graduate school application process. I now want to be a rehabilitation counselor, counseling people who have been handicapped or disabled, physically or emotionally, in traumatic accidents.

It has been more than two years and sometimes I can't believe it ever happened, yet I could never forget it. I went to rehab with some people who were in much worse shape than I was and I often wonder if they have regained any sense of normalcy. Even though I was disoriented for much of my time in rehab, I formed a bond with those patients. We were all at our most vulnerable state and we became each other's cheerleaders. Old or young, we were all going through the same experience – fighting to regain some kind of a normal life. It was the most challenging thing I have ever done, but when I look back on those days, a smile usually comes across my face because I shared a lot of “monumental” moments with the therapists and fellow patients.

I think of that experience less and less as time goes on, but I could never forget or deny that it happened because it has had such a profound impact on my life. Like those Nike sneakers I was wearing in the accident, and all of those get-well cards and stuffed animals I received in the hospital, the experience is something I will carry with

me from college to marriage to graduate school and to my future career. It has shaped who I am today and the person I want to become. I am forever changed.



## END NOTES

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3. Tom Novack. "TBI Facts and Stats," September, 1999. <http://www.neuroskills.com/index.html?main=tbi/facts.shtml>. (May 30, 2003).
4. Dan Windheim, "Out Of My Mind." 1997-2000, <http://www.tbi-life.org> (May 30, 2003).
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Michelle House  
*Casey*  
Gelatin silver print, 9" x 16"



# a profane reaction to sacred music

MICHAEL CADES

*...may God increase the delight of your life in listening to music...*<sup>1</sup>

Ruzbihan Baqli's (d. ah 606 / ce 1209) writing on Sufi musical aesthetics is perhaps one of the most inspired reactions to music I have encountered. The religious, or spiritual (some perhaps would be more comfortable with the latter term) element of music is one rarely discussed now; in fact, the association of religion with music is considered blasphemous by many. Christian rock is considered, by most mainstream listening audiences, an abomination of the spirit of rock 'n roll rebellion. Gospel, though the parent of rock and roll, and surprisingly popular in Europe, remains mostly confined to churches and religious radio stations. Satan may be more popular in the modern genre than God. This intentional exclusion of the divine from current music may be one of the greatest oversights in our musical landscape. The Sufi attitude toward music and its seemingly fundamental connection with the divine presents an interesting counter-point.

*The one who seeks to listen to music should have veins that are purified of base desires and filled with light from purity of devotion. He should be present and listening in the divine presence with his very soul, in order to be far from the temptation of the carnal soul...*<sup>2</sup>

As is religious worship for Muslims, every aspect of music within Sufi culture is rigidly defined. When listening to music, according to the Sufis, one is confined to a prayer-like position. The atmosphere for listening to music is similarly dictated, it must be secluded and free of distraction. One is not to enjoy the music in a hypocritical way; one's ecstasy must be honest and controlled. Similarly, musicians are expected to be attentive of the listener's reaction and adjust their performance accordingly. Fees are not to be bickered over and those wishing to hire performers are expected to cover travel expenses and pay for whatever music is provided without question. The implication here is that music is God and musicians are servants of God. Listeners, by embracing the divine under these stringent conditions, are freed of worldly concerns, which by Sufi definition, brings them closer to God.

*For listening to music is God's listening to music, it is from God, by God, in God and with God.*<sup>3</sup>

There is something remarkable and truthful about this philosophy. For all of our modern insistence on the secular nature of music, one cannot deny the profoundly spiritual effect a song can have upon us. The complete faith the Sufi masters have in this truth, and the way they express it is nothing short of poetic.

Unfortunately the rules they apply to music, and the way it is to be listened to and enjoyed, are just as limiting as the modern day denial of the spiritual element. The idea that common people should not be able to enjoy music is absurd. That only those trained to enjoy music—while this aspect does somewhat appeal to my own musical snobbery—can truly feel the spiritual aspect of it is abhorrent. Ruzbihan Baqli, who describes the multifaceted effects of music so eloquently, is limiting the reach of its profundity by restricting the enjoyment of it to the strictly religious. The need for lack of worldly desires, while understandable within the framework of Islam, is a harsh, and unfortunate oversight.

Rock and Roll at one point was a unique blend of these two ideologies toward music. Soul, which was seen by the religious as blasphemy, eventually blended with Gospel, the music of the faithful, to create what has become the most influential and dominant music of the last fifty years. Its success is based upon the notion that music is both secular and spiritual without forcing either. One has the ability, within a good piece of music, to lose oneself in the divine sphere of worldly concerns.



ENDNOTES

1. Ruzbihan Baqli, "On Listening to Music," in Carl Ernst, *Teachings of Sufism* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1999), 97.
2. Baqli, "Music," in Ernst, *Sufism*, 98.
3. Baqli, "Music," in Ernst, *Sufism*, 98.

# sophia kovalevskaja

*a woman and a mathematician*

JENNIFER HARTMAN

*“[A] female professor of mathematics is a pernicious and unpleasant phenomenon – even, one might say, a monstrosity.”<sup>1</sup>*

This quotation, from a newspaper article reporting her acceptance of a teaching position in Sweden, is one example of the lifelong attacks made on mathematician Sofia Kovalevskaja.<sup>2</sup> Born in Russia in 1850, Kovalevskaja was a senior faculty member at the University of Stockholm and one of the first women in Europe to hold such a position.<sup>3</sup> Her research on the revolution of a solid body about a fixed point, dubbed the “mathematical mermaid” because of its difficulty,<sup>4</sup> won her the Prix Bordin of the French Academy of Sciences, which had been awarded only ten times in fifty years.<sup>5</sup> Despite these accomplishments, she is largely unknown today except in mathematical circles; however, Sofia Kovalevskaja is a fascinating figure whose life history may be examined as a study of gender as well as mathematics.

Throughout her childhood, Kovalevskaja felt smothered by the common belief that reading and learning were not suitable for girls. When Anna, Sofia’s older sister, approached their father about going to Petersburg to study, he responded, “If you yourself don’t understand that it is the duty of every respectable young woman to live with her parents until she gets married, then I’m not about to argue

with a stupid brat!”<sup>6</sup> Even at the universities women were not taken seriously when, in the early 1860s, they first appeared unofficially to listen to lectures. Many professors in St. Petersburg were indifferent, not realizing that this was only the beginning of women pursuing higher education; they assumed that it was simply a passing female trend.<sup>7</sup>

Far from being a trend, however, women’s education was closely linked to the era’s social and political movements, which in turn were influenced by the natural sciences. The nihilists, those who “considered the Russia of their fathers politically, morally, and socially bankrupt” and who “dedicated themselves to undermining the autocracy,” “questioned just about everything in traditional tsarist Russia, had great faith in the natural sciences and the power of education, strongly believed in the equality of women, and desired to be of use to the common people in some capacity.”<sup>8</sup> Young men who thought that the ability to solve the world’s problems lay in science often became professors of natural sciences and, in support of the ideas nihilism, were more willing to teach women than were professors in the humanities.<sup>9</sup> Because women were more accepted in scientific fields, many women chose to study these subjects over the stereotypically feminine arts and literature.

In Russia, however, women attending lectures was soon made nearly impossible. During the early 1860s students began demonstrating for increased rights at universities. These uprisings led the universities to deny admittance to all students who were not officially enrolled. The result of this was that Russian women students, whose status was often unofficial, had “little possibility for higher education except private tutoring and study abroad.”<sup>10</sup> Further, those women who had been able to become scientists, scholars, and political activists often could not find employment in their own country and went to Sweden, Germany, and other European countries for work.<sup>11</sup>



For Kovalevskaia, the need to travel abroad might also have been fueled by her knowledge of her mother's life. Elizaveta led an isolated, lonely existence; her husband, several years older, treated her like a child and often excluded her from his daily affairs.<sup>12</sup> This may explain why, although she withdrew from household affairs and much participation in her children's lives, in private she sympathized with Anna's desires to travel abroad and study. She wrote in her diary, "... although I don't encourage her, I understand the dreams and aspirations of youth, for which I had to suffer so much."<sup>13</sup> Many scholars have speculated that, for Anna and Sofia, seeing their mother's dissatisfaction and the subordinate position she held because of her sex drove them to want a different kind of life away from such a restricting environment.<sup>14</sup> Kovalevskaia "dreamed of opening a new road for women" with her mathematics.<sup>15</sup> She told a friend, "I feel that my destiny is to serve the truth, that is science, and to blaze the trail for women, because that means to serve justice."<sup>16</sup>

Despite the many obstacles, such as being barred from university studies, that Kovalevskaia and other women of her generation had to face, it was truly a time of social revolution in Russia, spurned largely by young people. Nihilism, which sought to tear down the traditions of society and rebuild it using intellectualism, was a great attraction for Kovalevskaia and other young people of her generation. She described the rebellion and the friction it caused between parents and children in the memoirs of her childhood:

*It might be said that during the decade between the beginning of the 1860s and the beginning of the 1870s, all the intellectual strata of Russian society were concerned with a single question: the family discord between the old and the young. No matter which gentry family one might inquire about at that period, one heard the same story: the parents had fallen out with their children. And these quarrels arose not from weighty material causes, but from questions of a purely theoretical and abstract nature.<sup>17</sup>*

The discord between parents and children bred a solidarity among young people at the time. While many young women were prohibited from studying abroad by their fathers (women were listed on their fathers' or husbands' passports and could not move away or travel without permission<sup>18</sup>), often young men were sympathetic to and supportive of their cause. Many young nihilist men were willing to enter into "fictitious marriages," in which they married young women in order to accompany them and their female friends abroad to study. Often, the couple separated once this was accomplished. Other times they lived together as friends, sometimes eventually consummating the marriage, as was the case of Sofia and her fictitious husband.

Because of her father's refusal to allow her to study abroad, Sofia's sister, Anna, with a friend, decided that she must obtain a fictitious husband. After a failed attempt, the friends next approached Vladimir Kovalevsky, a young scholar, who said that he would prefer to marry Sofia.<sup>19</sup> Sofia's family did not suspect that the marriage was "fictitious," and the benefits of being able to travel and to be a chaperone for her sister and their other unmarried friends were clear. Thus, as Beatrice Stillman, a translator of Kovalevskaja's writings, noted, "the emancipation of Sofya Krukovskaya was accomplished through the literal application of sexual politics": the young people used "existing Russian law for the purpose of helping women to become free."<sup>20</sup>

Because she was married, Sofia was able to study, work, and travel, often without her husband. The greater leverage her marriage afforded her to pursue these goals is evidence of the standards of respectability and femininity which, as a woman, she was expected to meet. However, Sofia often found that living up to these standards taxed her time and diverted her attention from her work. Although people usually found Kovalevskaja entertaining and welcoming, she "felt increasingly uncomfortable in the society lady mold... such a life could never satisfy her; only a life of productive mathematical work could do that."<sup>21</sup> Stillman wrote, "she was too much of an individual and too committed to her

work to content herself with an existence preoccupied exclusively with domesticity.”<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, Kovalevskaia saw the necessity of fulfilling the “society lady mold,” at least in appearance. To be seen as more socially acceptable, she at times seems to have been able to appease the social expectation that she comply with standards of femininity. In a letter to a friend, written when she was abroad, she declared, “I’m fully agreeable to bowing to the opinion of Stockholm society in all the trivialities of life. In my dress and style of life and choice of acquaintances and such I meticulously avoid all that could offend the most severe judge—usually female...”<sup>23</sup> Though she was generally known to be lively, friendly, and entertaining at social gatherings, while in Germany she remained shy and introverted; as her friend noted in her memoirs, this “pleased her German professors very much, because in general they set great store on modesty in women, especially in such a prominent woman as Sofa, who in addition was studying such an abstract subject as mathematics.”<sup>24</sup> In this way, Kovalevskaia forced herself to play a more “feminine” social role in order to compensate for being in such a “masculine” occupation and to be accepted into the social circles which would help her advance in mathematics and allow her to be active politically.

In addition to her demeanor, Kovalevskaia’s attractive physical appearance also worked in her favor. According to her friend Iuliya Lermontova, “...she made quite a peculiar impression with her childish complexion... She was already 18, but she seemed much younger.”<sup>25</sup> Her look of innocence and her “uncommonly expressive and live features”<sup>26</sup> were pleasing and, although she may not have intentionally used this to her advantage, her appearance certainly helped her to earn friends and admirers from many who might have been against her education had she been less attractive. German mathematician Carl Runge wrote in a letter, “It was strange for me to talk of mathematics with a lady and to be able to discourse with complete freedom.... I had imagined her to be sharp-nosed, old-looking, and with

spectacles, but I was amazed to find that a scientific education can match such a perfect femininity.”<sup>27</sup> Her femininity, because it was so pleasing and often disarming to those who were expecting little variation on the stereotypical old maid, helped her to be more accepted or to wield influence in stereotypically masculine spheres. One story which is often cited in works on Kovalevskaia is her interaction with chemist Wilhelm Bunsen. Bunsen had sworn never to allow women, particularly Russian women, into his laboratories. Iuliya Lermontova wanted to study chemistry, however, and Kovalevskaia, in the words of her famous teacher and close friend Karl Weierstrass, “came to him and began asking him so tenderly that he could not resist and changed his mind.”<sup>28</sup> Kovalevskaia was able to use her charm and femininity to make herself less threatening in a masculine sphere and her mathematical abilities to prove that she was not detrimental to the study of science.

In many other ways, however, Kovalevskaia did not seem to heed the expectations of society and was often teased or rebuked for it. Kovalevskaia was expected to maintain certain standards of dress and housekeeping and was often chided for not wearing the most fashionable clothes or for not paying more attention to her furnishings. While living in Sweden, she made a feeble attempt at dressing up her shabby furniture. She was amused when her friends criticized her inadequate decorating and “pointed out the holes, the scratches, the missing leg on one cabinet, and could not accept that Sofia intended to leave everything as it was.”<sup>29</sup> Though she had many other important obligations with her research and her teaching, she was still expected to maintain these domestic standards.

Although Kovalevskaia was criticized for neglecting to meet standards of femininity, she was also chided for not rejecting the traditional expectations of women those times she did fill the roles of wife, mother, and socialite according to conventions. When mentor and friend Gosta Mittag-Leffler visited and saw that she was doing needlework and not mathematics, “he would explode with exasperation.”<sup>30</sup> In a more significant example, Sofia’s sister, Anna, did not approve of Sofia’s situation

with Vladimir; after their marriage, they lived together as close friends, but Anna thought that they were “too close for a fictitious marriage.”<sup>31</sup> Though their relationship seems to have remained completely platonic during this time, Sofia’s friendship with her husband was too feminine and domestic for her sister, who thought that their circle of female friends should focus only on their scholarly work and political campaigns. Clearly, Kovalevskaja felt the demands of many different societal and cultural traditions. Many seem to have expected Kovalevskaja to be either completely feminine or completely masculine: the idea that a normal, healthy woman could exhibit traditional qualities of both masculinity and femininity was either impossible or too unsettling to accept. Mathematician Semen Tsvet wrote to Sofia Kovalevskaja, saying her pleasing way of exhibiting traditionally masculine and feminine roles: “I... value you not only as a figure in mathematics, but for the whole of your exquisitely fine being.”<sup>32</sup>

This compliment was an apt one for Kovalevskaja, who not only struggled against gender prejudices to study mathematics but also, because of her impassioned beliefs and non-mathematical interests, approached mathematics in a unique and interesting way. Not only was she able to dispel stereotypes about women, but she was also able to dispel many traditional but narrow-minded notions about mathematics. Kovalevskaja’s political views, as well as her literary interests, influenced her mathematics, proving that mathematics, more than a rigid, structured science, is not only objective but employs creativity and imagination and can touch the heart the way that many consider poetry to do.

Kovalevskaja won esteemed awards and positions, contributing to mathematics research until her early death at age.<sup>41</sup> Her natural aptitude combined with her hard work contributed to the many mathematical accomplishments and advancements she made as well as the awards she received; often, the sole obstacle she faced was her sex, which is seen in the fact that “first woman ever” can describe many of her accomplishments. Weierstrass wrote to mathematician Lazarus

Fuchs, “As far as Kovalevskaja’s mathematical education is concerned, I can testify that I have had few students that could be compared to her in diligence, ability, commitment, and absorption in science.”<sup>33</sup> Even as a young girl, Kovalevskaja displayed originality and ingenuity in her approach to mathematics. Her tutor, Iosif Malevich, recalled when he gave Kovalevskaja her first exposure to the concept of  $\pi$ : “...we came in geometry to the ratio of the circumference to the diameter, which I presented with all the proofs and inferences, and I was amazed when my pupil made her presentation of the material at the next lesson, coming to the same conclusion but in her own way and using special combinations.”<sup>34</sup>

Kovalevskaja was also often amazed at her talent. When she won the Prix Bordin for the solid body problem, she wrote,

*The result was beyond what I had hoped. Some fifteen papers were present, but it was mine which was found deserving of the prize. And that was not all: in view of the fact that the same topic had been assigned three times running and had remained unsolved each time, and also in view of the significance of the results achieved, the Academy voted to increase the previously announced award of 3000 francs to 5000.*<sup>35</sup>

Kovalevskaja had reason to be so pleased. Other mathematicians such as Euler and La Grange had been able to solve it “only in certain isolated instances.”<sup>36</sup> Further, her work “opened a number of new and exciting pages in the history of the rotation problem” and “stimulated many other investigations connected with particular solutions for the general problem, and studies of the particular solutions of Kovalevskaja’s case.”<sup>37</sup>

Kovalevskaja’s laudable work in mathematics is also evidenced in the way many of her fellow scholars viewed her. German mathematician Herman Schwarz said, to another student, of Kovalevskaja,

*Oh, she is a wonderful woman; our common great teacher Professor Weierstrass writes to me so much about her studies. Recently he sent me*

*her compilation of his lectures on Abelian functions. You will not have been able to study them yet, they are the most difficult subject in mathematics, and few men dare tackle them.*<sup>38</sup>

Many other scientists appealed to her for help and guidance and received it. Mathematician Herman Schwarz wrote to her, "...I need to talk to you about... a scientific problem whose difficulties I cannot cope with, but which you should be able to overcome."<sup>39</sup> Further, as biographer Ann Hibner Koblitz noted, "[S]he was one of those mathematicians who become more productive as they age rather than less so. Her colleagues were unanimous in saying that she died in the full flower of her creative abilities...."<sup>40</sup> Contrary to the prevalent notion that mathematics is for the young, quick, and clever male, Kovalevskaia proved that mathematics can be for the older, steady, and clever female.

Both mathematicians and non-mathematicians throughout the years have claimed that Kovalevskaia was simply a puppet of Weierstrass or was stealing his work. Writer Isabel Hapgood, a translator of Kovalevskaia's memoirs of childhood from Russian into English, declared that Kovalevskaia "was always mentally dependent upon a man" and that "she originated nothing" and "merely developed the ideas of her teachers."<sup>41</sup> Weierstrass, however, adamantly refuted such claims himself. Commenting on her work on a partial differential equations proof which became known as the Cauchy-Kovalevskaia Theorem, he explained, "Except for correcting her numerous grammatical mistakes I did not do anything other than formulate the problem for the author of the dissertation in question."<sup>42</sup> He went on to say that he was even surprised by the results which Kovalevskaia came to independently and had expected a different conclusion but that "the seemingly simple means she found to overcome the obstacle I value highly as proof of her mathematical flair."<sup>43</sup>

Kovalevskaia's "mathematical flair" was also exhibited in the clarity of her work. Often, her proofs were cited for their clarity as much

as for their mathematical content. As Koblitz noted, “What amazed Kovalevskaja’s contemporaries most about her solutions was their simplicity and elegance. Her reasoning was so clear, her grasp of abelian functions so complete, that the steps of her argument flow one from the other with ease.”<sup>44</sup> Further, the lucidity of her mathematics is no surprise when one considers the quality of Kovalevskaja’s writing. Malevich, Kovalevskaja’s childhood tutor, wrote, “I was amazed and carried away by her truthful, capable, and well-worded viewpoint, against which even the best teacher of literature could not dissent.”<sup>45</sup> A reviewer of her semi-autobiographical novella *Nihilist Girl* proclaimed, “What grips the reader is the plot itself, a story that has been ... delineated clearly and boldly; it takes possession of the reader with its arrangement...”<sup>46</sup> It is this ability to write clearly and convincingly which helped her to become such an effective researcher and good teacher.

Kovalevskaja believed that mathematics benefit from an understanding of literature and the art of writing. Throughout her life, she wrote many pieces of fiction, non-fiction, poems, and plays. For Kovalevskaja, there was an inherent connection between the creative, imaginative world of literature and the supposed objective, logical field of mathematics. In a letter, she wrote,

*Many who have never had the occasion to discover more about mathematics confuse it with arithmetic and consider it a dry and arid science. In reality, however, it is a science which demands the greatest imagination... it is impossible to be a mathematician without having the soul of a poet...*<sup>47</sup>

Mathematics required subjectivity and creativity. She understood that it was not simply about having the abilities to distinguish between right and wrong answers, but had much to do with using the imagination to guide the mind through the gray areas of mathematics—unseen or unnoticed in the logical, objective results of proofs and provisions of theorems—which many people do not realize exist.



Just as creativity was very much a part of Kovalevskaja's mathematics, mathematics was definitely a part of Kovalevskaja's thoughts and feelings. Though she was devoted to mathematics and the sciences, "Sonya's dreams [were] also related to the current social mood..."<sup>48</sup> She was drawn into a movement which claimed that science can cure social evils. Her mathematical pursuits served a social purpose, as they were tied to her political beliefs and her hopes for social change in Russia. Moreover, mathematics was often an escape, a place where she could lose herself when she was most upset. When her sister, Anna, became ill with cancer, Kovalevskaja used mathematics as an "occupation to distract herself while she sat by her unconscious sister's bedside."<sup>49</sup> She often delved into her research at these times, and, she wrote to a friend, "...At such moments mathematics are a relief. It is such a comfort to feel that there is another world outside of one's self."<sup>50</sup>

For Kovalevskaja, mathematics was not simply a foreign entity to be scrutinized from afar but was something more personal in which she could involve herself emotionally as well as intellectually. She often expressed the joy her work provided for her: "I am only happy when I am immersed in my meditations," she wrote to her sister just before going abroad to study.<sup>51</sup> Further, with the eagerness typical of young adults, she seemed to have been aware of her potential, which she fulfilled, to contribute important research to her field. She continued in the letter, "...if now, in my best years, I do not study my favorite subjects exclusively, then maybe I shall waste time that I shall never be able to recover. ...[M]y whole life will hardly be enough to achieve what I think I can on the road I took."<sup>52</sup>

One of Kovalevskaja's friends quoted her as saying "Let me only be touched by mathematics and I forget everything else in the world."<sup>53</sup> This quotation poignantly sums up the work and experiences of Kovalevskaja's life, for whom the study of math was an emotional and political as well as intellectual experience. Unlike those who view mathematics as an objective discipline with little room for creative

and independent thinking, and, subsequently, little room for women, Kovalevskaja threw herself into the study of mathematics, outdoing many of her male contemporaries and, in the process, exposing new and interesting truths about the creative nature of mathematics and its connection with other art forms such as literature. Though she had to balance womanhood with intellectual pursuits, Kovalevskaja negated stereotypes about the nature of women, and, in working in an academic field and devoting her life to scholarly work, she overcame obstacles and defied the social expectations of a woman's proper place. Despite societal barriers put before her, Kovalevskaja refuted myths and preconceived notions about femininity and the very nature of mathematics.



ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in Beatrice Stillman, "Sofya Kovalevskaja: Growing up in the Sixties," *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 9 (Spring 1974): 289.
2. Kovalevskaja's name (as well as other names) is spelled many different ways. I have used one form in my writing and, when quoting, have been faithful to the spelling of the author or translator.
3. Michael Tabor, "Modern dynamics and classical analysis," *Nature* 310 (1984): 278.
4. Pelageya Kochina, *Love and Mathematics: Sofya Kovalevskaya*, ed. A. Yu. Ishlinsky and Z. K. Sokolovskaya, trans. Michael Burov (Moscow: Mir Publishers, 1985), 291.
5. Stillman, "Growing up..." 291.
6. Sofya Kovalevskaja, *A Russian Childhood*, trans; Beatrice Stillman. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1978), 152.
7. Ann Hibner Koblitz, *A Convergence of Lives* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 62.
8. Ibid., 5 and 39.
9. Ibid., 58.
10. Ibid., 64.
11. William M. Mandel, *Soviet Women* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1975), 24.
12. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*... 14.
13. Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligensia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 66.
14. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 16.
15. Ibid., 40.
16. Ibid., 75.
17. Kovalevskaja, *A Russian Childhood*, 146.
18. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 56.
19. Ibid., 72.
20. Stillman, "Growing up," 277.
21. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 153.

ENDNOTES (cont.)

22. Stillman, "Growing up," 288.
23. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 188.
24. Ibid., 89.
25. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 86.
26. Ibid., 86.
27. Ibid., 196.
28. Ibid., 55.
29. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 199.
30. Stillman, "Growing up," 291.
31. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 93.
32. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 187.
33. Ibid., 79.
34. Ibid., 24.
35. Kovalevskaia, *A Russian Childhood*, 227.
36. Stillman, "Growing up," 291.
37. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 306.
38. Ibid., 74.
39. Ibid., 190.
40. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 248.
41. Isabel Hapgood, "Notable Women: Sonya Kovalevsky," *Century Magazine* 50 (1895): 539.
42. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 82.
43. Ibid., 82.
44. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 242.
45. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 23.
46. Ibid., 225.
47. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 231.
48. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 47.
- 49., 50. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 202.
- 51., 52. Kochina, *Love and Mathematics*, 51.
53. Koblitz, *A Convergence*, 141.

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# the sum of parts

The square root of negative one  
is an imaginary number. Finding one

is not as simple as adding  
two or twelve. You must wait  
for another imagined sum.

Ten years crept into my head.  
I kept textbook journals  
and scrawled algebra.

I added sums; imagined radical ones.  
The slopes of our bodies. I learn  
the calculus of longing.

HEIDI ATWOOD





# against water marks

On television we watch Prague  
Going down. Buildings submerge.  
Statues sink. Drowning in Vlatava.

We read Heraclitus. Our faces  
Shift downstream. Silt  
Slipping under foot.

Along Mala Strana buildings tower  
Gutted and drilled. We measure  
Ourselves against water marks.

Gape when we see the inches we have lost.

HEIDI ATWOOD



# grey shadows of the past

FLORIN IVAN

*It is a dry white season  
dark leaves don't last, their brief lives dry out  
and with a broken heart they dive down gently headed  
for the earth,  
not even bleeding.  
it is a dry white season brother,  
only the trees know the pain as they still stand erect  
and dry like steel, their branches dry like wire,  
indeed, it is a dry white season.  
but seasons come to pass*

MORGANE WALLY SEROTE (FOR DON M.) —BANNED

**W**hen I first arrived in South Africa I did not know what to expect. Some friends told me about its beauty while others warned me about the dangers lurking around every corner. According to some, I was even going to get killed because the savages did not know any better. Having rejected the fact books and other statistics about the country that I deemed as not providing a clear, real picture of what South Africa represented, I stepped off the plane only to find something different from what my friends

described. There were no savages, and the environment I was in was not entirely exotic, but resembled the home to a great extent.

When I landed in Port Elisabeth, I saw palm trees blended with all kinds of bush and other plants. The combination was very attractive and the warm weather was an added bonus. Charles, my host for the day, was waiting for me in the arrivals section of the airport. He was an ordinary person with a funny accent. We went to his apartment – a modern and stylish one with an ocean view. On the street next to his building we found some artifact vendors and I heard the story of their art as we started a conversation. They came originally from Nigeria and Kenya, but re-located to Port Elisabeth because the living conditions were better.

After those first encounters, I immediately dismissed my friends' fears. Diversity was at home in this country and I could not imagine why the outsiders had a distorted image about the relationships between the people. Everything was peaceful and the people I met were extremely friendly. Soon enough, however, I was to discover what lies beneath the veil of harmony. I was bombarded with new words: apartheid, homelands, Bantu, white, black, colonialism, township, Black Consciousness. I had heard some of them before, but at the time I could not imagine their impact, the web linking them together. It was difficult to understand how it was possible to live in a modern area and have as neighbours thousands of people, living mostly in one-room shacks, without proper sanitary conditions.

As I made more friends, my knowledge of relationships between peoples grew. My new friends, who belonged to different South African ethnic backgrounds, told me stories about their lives, and I came to understand the past a bit more. I heard about apartheid and the division among people. The books I read revealed that apartheid had ended in 1994<sup>1</sup> and now everybody is allowed to be free and exercise all their rights. Still, the reality in which I was living did not correlate with what the books were saying. People lived separate lives, on many levels. The black and white populations are still separated in part and

the white population generally enjoys a better life, even if whites are a minority in South Africa (13.6%).<sup>2</sup> Races are not really mixing even eight years after apartheid officially disappeared. Even if we look inside one racial group, we see ethnic divisions. The Xhosa are different from the Tswana or the Sotho or the Zulu. There are levels of superiority and inferiority depending on the area in which you are. The ethnic barriers that divide the people intrigued me and I wanted to learn more about the causes. The reasons why people adopted a certain social identity based on their ethnicity were unclear and needed an explanation.

“Ethnicity is not only a common or social identity for people. It is also a term used to explain occurrences. It is the ‘name’ that has been attached to many recent events and conflicts in South Africa.”<sup>3</sup> The ethnic identities behind which people were hiding when interacting with others had a story to reveal. The Xhosa showing their superiority to the Zulus while being marginalized by the Afrikaners; people from different backgrounds eating separately in the dining hall; in my opinion, these were all examples of unnatural occurrences, and I wanted to find out what triggered such behaviours. John Berger wrote that “[i]f every event which occurred could be given a name, there would be no need for stories.”<sup>4</sup> Apartheid was on everybody’s lips when they were explaining the way blacks, whites, coloureds and Indians had been separated. Apartheid meant separate development and implied the superiority of white colonialists at the expense of the “non-whites.” Apartheid was a monster eating the lives of people and degrading them to a level where humans were not entirely human.

What exactly was apartheid? It seemed to me that labelling all these phenomena as *apartheid* is not enough. I agree with Maré that “we have to tell as much of the whole ‘story’ as possible to understand a particular event or series of events, rather than just giving them a label such as ‘ethnic conflict’. We have to reveal relationships, fill in gaps, provide a sense of history and process, and illustrate the circumstances giving rise to such events.”<sup>5</sup> Through this paper I want to

reveal some stories about what apartheid means to some people and how they deal with its consequences. It is not my intention to make of this a research paper in the proper academic way, full of citations and sources. Countless books have been written about apartheid and I do not intend to make a summary of them. Rather, I want to explore real people's lives and find genuine opinions about what happened and how those people are coping with today's reality. I cannot claim that I will accurately describe the thoughts of the people I interviewed because I am aware that I view their experiences through a different lens. This is why I will include my reactions to the events I witnessed, because I believe that in this way some of my prejudices will be revealed. Indirectly, this paper will also reveal the ways in which my views as an outsider have changed. Being among different people and listening to their stories was an intense learning process which impacted my perspective on the relationships between people, on what apartheid represented, how it happened and why.

My informants were people from the townships of Josa in Grahamstown and Gugulethu in Cape Town. My focus was on the people in Josa, but I had the opportunity to meet several people from Gugulethu and I considered it necessary to express their views on some aspects of apartheid legacy. In Josa, I conducted a series of interviews with a few people that I came to know through a friend at Rhodes. I have not revealed the identity of any persons mentioned in this paper in order to guarantee confidentiality; I use pseudonyms instead.

The interest I took in the township people's stories was not arbitrary. When I first visited the township, I traveled inside a minibus and I was advised that it was more safe to remain inside the bus. I saw all the regions of the township: the black area, the coloured area, the Indian area, and I learned how apartheid worked and how the government managed to keep people of different races separated. Later on, I made friends with Xhosa students and we shared our stories during lunches or at night, when studying became tedious and we

needed something exciting to keep us awake. I learned that there are as many similarities between our cultures as there are differences. For example, both cultures show deep respect for their elders through language, and it is all right for men to show their emotions. However, in my homeland of Romania, people do not revere ancestors in their culture and circumcision is not regarded as a rite of passage.

Still, I felt that I was not experiencing all the different facets of life in South Africa. Both South African and Romanian cultures had traumatic pasts, but I was learning the Xhosa past from a certain angle. My professors were all white and whenever we talked about apartheid, I got the same story: blacks were discriminated against, whites were the evil oppressors, blacks rebelled against the system, and apartheid was over. The books I read gave me the same description, but I was not hearing how people felt, or what their individual experiences had been. This meant that I received a lifeless, dull picture of the situation. My learning seemed too detached from reality.

Everyday I saw the township from campus, with all its small houses, with all its life. But what did it mean to me? Was it just a mass of people clustered together that had no identity? Why was it not safe to step out of the car in the township? Why don't white people go to the township? My Xhosa friend Sodo asked me this once, and I had no answer at the time. I realized that I was living a sheltered life, and my South African experience confined to the campus surroundings. In order to hear the voice of the people "beyond the bridge," I had to go there.

Sodo introduced me to the township. He was a student in my economics class and I became friends with him because I kept giving him the notes for the classes he had missed. When I learned that he lived in Josa, I asked him if he could show me around and he agreed. We walked to his house and as we left town the world changed. I was now in the black area, which was so alive. The noise of cars speeding on the paved streets and poisoning us with exhaust fumes was behind us. We were facing the music of the people, their buzz as they conducted their daily routines, bargaining for food sold on the street or

coming from work, some carrying small children around their backs, others holding their friends' hands. There was a true sense of community and everybody seemed to know everybody because everybody was greeting everybody. Even I started to say *Molo! Unjani?* [Hello! How are you?] to people as I walked with Sodo, looking them in the eye and smiling at them. They were very surprised to see me walking around and greeting them in their language, but nonetheless they welcomed me with warmth. As we walked towards the heart of the township, my senses were awakened by the smell of cows, the sewage from the ditches on the side of the road, and alcohol. I saw people carrying large cases of one-litre beer bottles that they were going to drink later on.

We finally arrived at Sodo's house that afternoon and he introduced me to some of the older men with whom I was going to speak. There were four people there, one of them Sodo's uncle, who was a teacher. I sat down on the ground with them, and we talked for almost two hours.

After talking about their sewage system, which was basically a canal that goes in front of every house, much like the ones we have in rural Romania, Xolani, Sodo's uncle mentioned communism. He said they favour the system because their culture is based on sharing. However, they were aware that if not applied properly, communism can be disastrous. They wanted to see a communism without a class structure, but unfortunately history has not encountered such a model that emphasized that. Another man said that communism is the highest stage of capitalism. I smiled. While I did not agree with what they were saying, I felt the need to tell them how communism worked in Romania: how we received rationed food, how we only got an hour of TV a day, featuring the president's accomplishments for the day. Sodo's uncle asked why we shot our president, and I told them about the Securitate [security police], the system's body of order enforcement, and how people couldn't trust any of their neighbours; how people



could not talk to one another because they were afraid that others were going to talk to the police.

Everybody saw that our experiences were somewhat alike and they started to open up more. However, when I mentioned that I wanted to do a project about their experiences in the township, they frowned. It seemed to me that I became the white man who is going to ask them many questions and then pretend to know their life stories. When they asked me why I wanted to do a project on them, I answered that I did not know any perspectives of the people in the township regarding apartheid, and I wanted them to inform me. They finally agreed to talk about it. I decided not to take notes during my interviews in order to make the atmosphere relaxed. As soon as I got back to Rhodes, I wrote down all I could remember from our conversations.

When I asked Xolani about apartheid and how he experienced it, he said that not everybody had access to education, and that the government forced them to learn Afrikaans in order to enroll in secondary school. He was fortunate to survive the system and he got a higher education from University of Port Elisabeth. He was now a teacher. Melekile, a very robust friend of Xolani, had similar experiences. He told me that he managed to go to the University of Fort Hare for a short time, but then dropped out because he found his courses too hard. The other two people I talked to did not have a higher education. They only finished the first few years in primary school. Their level of English was not satisfactory, and when they talked, they used Xhosa as interpreter. Xolani translated their comments into English.

Despite their education, only Melekile was employed, as a shelf stacker in the Grahamstown Library for the Blind. Xolani said he had a part-time job for a short time two years ago. He taught history in a black school. He did not seem very happy about the situation because he was looking for something more stable. After he lost his job, he continued to search for a position, but he was unsuccessful. "Nobody

seems to want people from the township as teachers," he added. Apartheid instituted segregation on all possible levels, and now whites are telling black people's history most of the time. Melekile told me about his boss, who is an Afrikaner. Even now, the boss 'tells' him what to do. Melekile is angry because he is regarded as an object: "My boss never said to me 'we should do this thing'." There was always a barrier between them. Still, he has a deep respect for the Afrikaners because they will at least tell you if they do not like you. The English are more reserved in expressing their true feelings, and they would rather pretend to like you, while the reality would be contradictory. Melekile stood up and started slowly walking in circles. He told me he did not understand why everybody behaves cautiously around blacks, hiding their feelings and trying to be politically correct about everything. "Why won't people understand that blacks are not necessarily mad about what happened any more, that they put apartheid behind them?" he asked. Another man intervened and said that they are trying to forget that era and they do not bear any grudge. He added that everybody simply wants to get ahead and live a decent life.

This brought us to the standard of living in the township, and what the people are doing about it. As I looked around me, I saw their homes, which had one or two rooms. The walls were made of mud, covered with pieces of tin on the outside. Melekile invited me into his house. He had two small rooms. In one room, he had two armchairs, a TV set, a stereo and a cupboard for the dishes. The kitchen was in an adjacent house that had belonged to his parents. He did not have running water and he said that he had to borrow water from Xolani. The toilet was outside. They used the "bucket system," meaning that they dug a hole in the ground, which served as the toilet. Earlier I had visited Sodo's house. This one was in better shape because it had concrete walls and better sanitary facilities, except for the toilet, which was built in the same style. In the yard, Sodo's father had built some of the childrens' rooms. One was still being built. The walls were made out of mud, covered by tin on the outside. The ceiling was made out of ply-

wood that was warped and a bit swollen from the rain. I noticed that the other houses had tin ceilings. The rooms had dirt floors. Xolani told me that the people did not have resources to build proper houses. The government did not finance them because they owned their property, so they had to build their own house. He mentioned that other people received more help from the government, which built houses for them. Those houses were in better condition, even if they were hastily constructed and had a lot of non-conformities.

They could not improve their homes because they did not have money. Xolani indicated that it started when they were removed from their homes. The apartheid regime announced that people had to be separated on a racial basis, so they dislocated millions of people and forcefully moved them to new locations. Different races could not share the same space, and nobody was allowed to cross the racial boundary, which took a physical form during that time.<sup>6</sup> Xolani moved three times until he settled in this place.

Poverty and the impossibility of owning decent housing and land brought about an array of problems, from inadequate diets to disease to conflicts and lack of motivation. The social life was another factor that I wanted to discuss with my informants. I had noticed that many people drank a lot of alcohol. On my way to Sodo's house I saw a *shebeen* [the local pub] full of people. Sodo showed me some big black barrels where they brewed the local beer. On the way, I noticed people carrying large cases of one-litre beer bottles that they had purchased from the bottle store. Sodo said that drinking "made the day go faster" since there were many people in the township who did not have jobs. The others told me that alcohol consumption was a problem because it gave rise to violent situations and tense relationships in the family.

With regard to relationships, Melekile discussed his relationship with his girlfriend. He said that they have a child together and that she wanted him to pay child support. They were not married, and Melekile said he did not have the finances to pay child support. He was not ready to take on responsibilities as a father, and it seemed that

the woman had to care for the baby herself. This supported the idea that women were subordinated to men, and that they were required to satisfy the men's needs. By contrast, in Sodo's family there was harmony between the two parents. They shared the house duties and everything seemed fine. However, it seemed to me there were a great number relationships like Melekile's. I thought about the children's upbringing. If they were not going to receive adequate care from both parents, it seemed to me that the social problems would not be solved.

The problems with the relationships between men and women in the township revealed the issue of HIV/AIDS. People told me that HIV/AIDS was a reality in the township, and that almost one person in five was infected with the virus. They said you knew if someone was suffering from the disease, because the whole family, if there were any, would try to help the person. As far as information about the disease and access to treatment methods were concerned, they said people generally have basic knowledge about the disease, but unfortunately there are little resources to cover the medical expenses necessary for the treatment.

When I visited the township of Guguletu I gained more insight into what the people are doing about the disease. I attended two services in a Presbyterian church. The services were held in Xhosa, and a friend of mine translated them into English. The first time I attended, it was interesting that the priest started by speaking about HIV/AIDS. He said that as a church, they must buy a medical practice in the township that was vacant because the doctor had died. He urged more participation from the community in home-care programs, established to tend the needs of those suffering with AIDS. His angry tone made me realize the proportions of which the disease had reached. Later in the service he addressed the safe sex issue. The reaction of the people was notable. The older women shouted the usual "u!" [sign of astonishment or surprise] and began murmuring. The men were listening quietly. Young people around me grinned cautiously. The reverend

carried on and explained the importance of using a condom in order to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus.

After the service he talked to young people about sex. They were embarrassed to talk to the priest about such an issue. Still, he felt it was his duty to be open about subjects like this, regardless of the fact that he was a clergy member. Talking about sex should not be regarded as a taboo anymore, because misinformation and carelessness got them to this stage, where they can hardly cope with the large number of HIV infections.

The second service I attended had the same theme. A young trainee in theology delivered most of the service. He was very energetic and delivered a tirade of criticism at the lack of community involvement in this problem. He mentioned that it is up to them to try and make things better, because as he put it, "The people living near Table Mountain (referring to upper-class people) do not fully understand the situation here, where we all live!" He also said that the people who are in power are not fully aware of the implications of this pandemic in the black community. They are not the ones that see the horror of AIDS every day, and therefore may not direct adequate resources towards solving this problem.

In the middle of a hymn, a lady came in front of the people, and at the end she started talking. She told everybody she was HIV-positive and she wanted to talk about how it is to live with the virus. The lady had a son and she contacted the virus during a relationship that she recently had with a boyfriend. She talked about the hardships she had to face after she discovered she was positive: the fact that she did not have a proper diet for months because of lack of money, coming to terms with the fact that she was going to die and leave behind a child with no other support, being rejected from her group of friends. She urged people to get tested for HIV. It was important to find out if you were infected and to seek help if that was the case. People who were found HIV-positive and denied it because they could not come to terms with reality or believed something like that could not hap-

pen to them posed a real problem. They were not getting the necessary help and they were also contributing to the spread of the disease. In the end, she mentioned the support groups that are available in the township and pleaded for more involvement from the community.

Hearing about AIDS from someone who was living it was extremely emotional. I did not know how to react. She was a normal person, yet she was suffering from this horrible disease and you could not even tell. I did not know what to do—to cry, to be mad, to pity her, to what? To remain indifferent? I heard about HIV/AIDS so many times, but every time it was so informal—it was just talking about it. Now, however, it was in front of me and it was alive. I finally realized the extent to which the disease is near to us yet we do not recognize that we live with it. Most of the time we deny its existence by saying “oh, it won’t happen to me,” but this is not the reality and we really have to be aware of that.

Back in Josa, the third time I visited I found my informants sitting around, drinking from a bottle of liquor. Xolani was eating cold cuts. After catching up with what had happened since I last came, we got into a discussion about their treatment during Botha’s regime. After finishing eating, Xolani told me about manslaughter. In order to keep order in the township, soldiers fired at people. Death was commonplace in those days, and soon enough, it became boring. “Day after day after day after day after day after day you would bury someone; it became a routine,” said Xolani. Even at funerals, he continued, “it would not matter if the coffin rolled into the ground, because the soldiers were pushing you from behind.” Melekile became angry at the fact that we were talking about such events. He was trying to forget it all. Apartheid was not something he wanted to talk about any more. The others stopped talking and all of us stared at the ground for a few seconds. Melekile then said that such a bad memory deserves to be buried. In the past, he said that you could not even play soccer in the field because the police and the soldiers considered you to be “talking” with others. The authority had to keep everybody separated

in order to maintain its power. If you said anything against the regime, if you even thought differently, you would go to prison. Nobody wanted to experience the life in prison because of the atrocities that happened behind iron bars and grey walls. Most people who were detained did not even have a trial. The ones that actually went to court were not treated any better. During trials, black people did not dare to look the judges in the eyes, and the sentence was obvious—guilty, “because the stupid blacks cannot even stand straight.” Xolani explained that in the black culture, respect is everything. He said that the blacks did not look up out of respect for the authority, not because they were stupid, or could not stand up straight. This was something that white people never properly understood.

Melekile added that today, there is a problem with the young people who do not have the same respect for their elders. I agreed with him, because I had heard the same from Sodo’s grandmother, whom I had interviewed in a previous session. She was 82 years old, and because she had difficulties walking she spent most days in bed. She had lost her sight a few years ago, and her daughter was taking care of her.

Sodo’s grandmother did not go to school because she was poor. During those days, her grandmother whom she lived with did not encourage her to go. She mentioned that parents were neglecting the children more than today. As a child, nobody told her any stories and she didn’t know any. Regarding the stories, she said that white people were different than black people: whites wrote their stories down while blacks did not, because they did not know how to read and write. She had a very good level of English, and when I asked her where she learned it, she said that her brothers, who were all teachers, taught her.

During apartheid, she did not seem to experience many traumas. She was happy because she could work for the white people. These days, she is very disappointed with the behavior of black people. She said that they do not care for work anymore, and all they can think

about is drinking. If they were working for white people, they would “drink the money.” This was a serious problem, in her opinion. Even the *ndombi* [girls] are drinking these days. There is no more shame anywhere. The township became a dangerous place because people would not care for other people; they would only care “for their father and mother.” This was the reason she did not want to go out, even if she could, because she was afraid she was going to get killed.

In contrast to what she mentioned about the younger generation, Sodo said that young people in the township seem to mind their business and he was confident that they would be much better off than their parents. Now that apartheid was over, “everybody is free to do as much as everybody else,” he commented. He believes the young generation will rebuild society so that harmony and understanding will once again reign.

Every time we entered the township, right at the corner of his street, he filled his nostrils with the scent in the air and said, “This is me, Florin, this is who I am.” I smiled and thought that he was very fortunate to know exactly where he belonged. Sometimes I am confused about where I belonged, although I tell everybody who asks I am Romanian. The fact that all young people I talked to wanted to remain in the township came as a surprise to me. Sodo’s dream is to finish university and teach in one of the township schools. He said that he wants to share his knowledge with everybody, that he wants more people to be well educated. He told me apartheid did not have a major influence on his life, because his parents were able to provide for most of his needs. He was fortunate enough to go to school and, once apartheid was over, he could enroll at Rhodes. He noted that there are more opportunities for young people these days. He will go on a training program to Denmark in the fall, and he hopes he will accumulate more experience.

Another thing that gives him peace and hope for the future is the church. He is very active in the Catholic Church in the township. There are many young people like him in the church and this makes



him happy. He believes that as long as people have the power to be humble, to care for those nearby, their lives will be peaceful. Next year he plans to get married. He respects his girlfriend more than anything in the world and wants to offer her only the best. She is currently studying at University of Port Elisabeth. Sodo showed me their future home, which was a present from his future father in-law. He is anxious to move in with his wife, and to eventually start a family. First, he intends to install a sewage system and to buy some more property around the house, so they can have more space. The rest, he says, "will come in its own time."

Life goes on in the township, with all its ups and downs. During my interviews, an unexpected event occurred: Xolani, Sodo's uncle, died. This came as a shock to everybody. From what Sodo told me, they found him one day lying on the floor, "frozen." He said that Xolani could not move, his whole body was paralysed. They took him to Settlers Hospital but unfortunately, after two days, he died. This made me stop and realize how precious is our life. Some people who have the resources enjoy it for a longer time, while others fade away at an early age, leaving behind nothing more than a memory. I was fortunate to get to know Xolani, for I learned many things from him. I found out how real people lived during and after apartheid, but most of all, I learned to appreciate small things like sitting down and sharing who you are with somebody. In order for his memory to stay fresh in our minds, I dedicate this project to him. It was truly unfortunate that he died, but at the same time, his death showed me once again that it was reality I was dealing with, and not merely something out of a book.

As for apartheid, its legacy continues to haunt the people, and the problems are still there. Until people's mentality changes, discrimination will continue to exist and we will not see significant progress. However, there are a few positive aspects that must be mentioned. Before I went into the township, I talked to my friends from Rhodes about it. When they found out that I was going to go there, they were

shocked. My other black friends told me they would not dare set foot in the township, because the Xhosa would pick on them. They told me that if you are black, they expect you to speak the language, and if you cannot, you are automatically rejected. They all agreed it was good that I was white, because at least I would be respected. My white friends did not think much about going to the township, mostly because they did not have anything to do there; they did not care about what is happening in that place. Their curiosity ran only to the bridge that separated the white area from the black area, and no further. Some of them warned me again of the dangers I was going to face, and roughly told me when it was OK to go: during the weekdays, before sunset, definitely not on Fridays or the weekend. I wondered how they knew all these timetables if they never went there. While I was doing my project, I kept having conversations with my friends about what I was doing, what I was talking about with the people, and what their reactions were to our topics of discussion. At the end of my project, there were several friends, black and white, who expressed an interest of joining me in one of my visits. I was excited that they finally understood that the only dangers are in our minds, and that prejudice is not something to live by. It was time to end all the misconceptions and to show them the reality.

I took some of them with me the next time I went into the township, and I believe everybody had a good visit. They got to see how other people live, and they also got to greet many people on the street, in the same old fashioned way: *Molo! Unjani?* [Hello! How are you?] In response, all of them received a smile and the response: *Ndipilile enkosi! Unjani wena?* [I am fine, thank you! How are you?] At the end of the day, I think such good will mattered more than my writing about what apartheid represented for the people in the township and how they wanted to put everything behind and look forward. Although it is important to express people's views and their way of life, that should not be the end. Big discoveries about people's lives are great, but unless they have an impact on something or somebody else,

they are not meaningful. I was glad my experience stirred other people's curiosity and that they made the effort to break through the walls of ignorance and misconception and find out the reality. I hope, the next time I visit South Africa I will not hear the story of the grey shadows of the past, but rather a more cheerful one, about understanding and cooperation among people.



END NOTES

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## in taos

In Taos, a poet wrote  
children drink blackberry tea  
rather than neon Hi-C  
and parents grow up just enough  
to grow their own.

I have traveled there  
to the city of artists and self-proclaimed free spirits.

What I found was a thirty year old waiter  
with perfect teeth and an evil smile  
who tried to slip between the rented sheets  
of high school virgins.

I chewed the green chilies  
because only the weak eat the red.  
Drenched in verga rain,  
and lapping margaritas like water  
I grinned and refused a man  
with my back to adobe.

On my stumble back to my room,  
I saw the rattlesnake eyeing my ankle.  
He did not bite;  
in Taos I am too spicy  
for the cold tongues of serpents.

AMANDA HEMPEL



# pollution, cohesion, & sexuality:

*a ritual analysis of food-sharing*

WILLIAM SMILEY

The notion that food-sharing is in fact a ritual performance might at first seem odd. After all, food is such a normal part of our everyday lives that the company we keep during its consumption hardly seems to have any particularly symbolic meaning. As Counihan observes, "Food rules are part of a usually unscrutinized cultural ideology that continuously leads to the reinforcement of life as it is. Because eating is such a basic condition of existence, people take their foodways for granted and rarely subject them to conscious examination."<sup>1</sup> It seems that we largely accept the process of eating as a mere biological necessity in which we happen to organize ourselves into groups that share food and conversation, all as a matter of convenience. However, such a simple understanding of our collective eating behavior denies the existence of a few crucial aspects of the individual and cultural identities that every human being possesses.

To scoff at the ritual dimensions of eating meals is to undermine some of our most basic views of the world around us. It degrades many of the beliefs we have formed about the connection between mind and body, as well as self and other, by ignoring our attitudes toward what nurtures our own physical health and the health of our interpersonal relationships. Besides, one who reduces the meal strictly to a biological necessity is hard-pressed to explain the wealth of creative expressions

with which people have endowed the many aspects of food acquisition, preparation, and consumption. For example,

*We insist on special places and times for eating, on specific equipment, on stylized decoration, on predictable sequence among the foods eaten, on limitation of movement, and on bodily propriety. In other words, we turn the consumption of food, a biological necessity, into a carefully cultured phenomenon.*<sup>2</sup>

DEFYING CONVENTION:

*a new look at ritual food sharing*

Food-sharing, it seems, is a far too loosely-structured and mundane event to be categorized under the conventional headings of ritual. Yet I am certain that these conventions are unnecessarily rigid and therefore exclusive from the start, only bringing into focus a popular view that ritual exists primarily within a religious context and even an anthropological view that “it is set off from the social routines of everyday life.”<sup>3</sup> In my opinion, some of the most useful rituals are in fact cloaked by the veil of our own secular human existence; they no longer stand apart from everyday life but are instead perceived as so necessary that they become a vital and nearly indistinguishable aspect of human interaction.

Of course, a biological necessity for food should not be confused with a biological inclination toward food-sharing. While biology provides instinct, culture provides ritual. Given the appropriate external stimulant or overall situation, both serve as automatically recalled repertoires of behavior that help us to cope with our environments. But, as Visser points out, we have a common misconception that rituals never change and that individuals have no influence on the various elements of ritual performance. With this mindset, the individual is essentially lost among the crowd of ritual participants, all of whom act in tandem according to the rules that provide a ritual backdrop toward which their behavior is aimed.



On the contrary, she maintains, "It is only the individual who can personally mean what is going on. . . . Ritual is a process; it guides, but is also serves, and is guided."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is instinct that remains largely static while ritual is dynamic through and through. Instinct is somehow passed from generation to generation because it's a proof positive way of coping. Ritual is also passed on due to its ongoing reliability, but it provides the increased flexibility of allowing one to make changes when the formalized method is in any way counterproductive to the situation at hand.

In this way, each time we sit down to eat with friends and family, we demonstrate our own creative influences on the ritual of food-sharing. With every performance, participants willingly reconstruct an interpretive variation of the meal that seems to subscribe to a conceptually idealized form of the ritual and must contain at least some of its basic elements. This, of course, serves to dictate what actions are acceptable and even encouraged, yet is carried out beneath the threshold of human perception, in both a fluid and subconscious fashion. In other words, there is no moment in time reserved for the reconstruction of ritual. Instead, each person must simultaneously process dozens of variables and, drawing from previous experience, attempt to suitably reenact a ritual performance with similar circumstances. Clearly, no one is alone in this endeavor, as the other human participants are among the variables to be taken into consideration and are at times even emulated. Ultimately, our creative manipulations of ritual expression show that although the intended messages are present in different symbolic forms, they are still expressed and understood. We must remember that we are not slaves to our rituals but are instead the influential figures that determine the forms they take. Ritual is not inherent, it is not biologically mandated, nor is it inescapable.

Because of his relative openness, I find Hicks' definition of ritual appealing: "repetitive forms of behavior that are carried out on socially prescribed occasions and that convey messages whose meaning may—or may not—be explicitly known to the participants,"<sup>5</sup> yet are nonetheless implicitly felt by them. However, I then defer to Leach in order to add a stronger focus to the concept: "Most modern anthropologists

would agree that culturally-defined sets of behaviors can function as a language, but not all will accept my view that the term ritual is best used to denote this communicative aspect of behavior”<sup>6</sup> with encoded messages communicating our attitudes toward each other, the occasion, and what we are saying or doing. It seems to me that ritual is also a predetermined sort of social contract that can be applied merely to oneself or to interaction with other human and non-human entities, often establishing in-groups as a result. All of these dimensions of ritual may very well go unspoken, but they are necessarily communicated through the ritual action itself, with its participants subscribing to the belief that it is being performed as it should be.

SELF AND THE OTHER:

*the social interplay of pollution*

When introduced to an unfamiliar source of food, it is inevitable and seemingly almost a part of our human instinct to ask, “What is this?” or “What’s in it?” We have what appears to be a very natural mistrust of food with unknown origins or ingredients. But why? Clearly, we are only willing to accept and share food from certain individuals. For example, if someone who you know only in passing were to offer you the remainder of his sandwich, you’d more than likely politely refuse his offer. Perhaps you’d explain, “No thanks, I’m not hungry,” even if the reverse were true. It’s very probable that only in cases of considerable hunger, where an alternative source of food is not readily anticipated, would someone accept this offer. But what is it that makes his sandwich such an unworthy source of nutrition? Kalcik explains, “Generally, we humans accept food most readily from our friends and allies and fear the food of strangers... Gordon Allport points out that familiarity gives humans the sense of goodness, and strangeness evokes a sense of wrongness or evil.”<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon can be interpreted as one of the structural organizing principles un-

derlying the order of society. Borrowing from Lévi-Strauss' work, one might argue that the apparent animosity and fear toward strangers is an illustration of how human beings understand the world around them by abstracting the existence of paired opposites such as self/other, strange/familiar, or good/evil.<sup>8</sup> In fact, an inherent recognition of this dichotomy is present within the sandwich owner's offer, which will more often than not contain certain reassurances. After refusal, he may very well say something along the lines of "I didn't bite into it. See?" and then display the uneaten sandwich half for inspection. Here, on some conscious level, there seems to enter the awareness of both parties for the fear of pollution; in this case, the sandwich owner recognizes the fear that his saliva might have touched the uneaten half or, even worse, that his leftovers were for some reason being discarded after being tested for edibility. Certainly, one is suspicious of why he is willing to offer some of his food in the first place. The optimist might conclude he was full and would rather see the remainder of his meal eaten by a relative stranger than go to waste. However, it does not seem to be in our nature to be carelessly optimistic when it comes to nurturing our bodies. Instead, we'll ponder if the sandwich is perhaps somehow unsavory or if ingesting it could even bring harm to us.

Katz's analysis of ritual in the operating room provides an interesting analogy; she reveals that hospitals distinguish between different classifications of nonsterile, including clean, dirty, and contaminated.<sup>9</sup> In the ordinary world of human interaction, most people perceive themselves as either clean or—with our "sensible" understanding of pathogens—dirty. Yet this is an acceptable sort of dirt as it is one's own; we reason that we cannot logically contaminate ourselves, even though pathogens would paradoxically suggest otherwise. Those with whom we are familiar are likewise considered either clean or dirty because "the more intimate people habitually are, the less they pollute one another: they 'belong together,' and pollution is a separating mechanism."<sup>10</sup> Strangers, of course, could be nothing other than either dirty or contaminated, with likelihood falling on the latter. Once again,

Lévi-Strauss's binary oppositions surface in the partnering of self/other—in which friends and family are viewed as an extension of the self—with clean/contaminated. Furthermore, "Physical contact is an essential part of ideas about pollution... Eating food, cooking it, serving it, sharing it out, and passing it to others requires intensely intimate contact, both with the food and with the dinner companions."<sup>11</sup> In this way, food-sharing is psychologically deemed a behavior with high risk of contamination.

Abrahams also notes, "It is only human that we regard the major orifices, especially our mouths, as providing an access to ourselves that must remain inviolate except in the most privileged moments, when openness is valued more highly than protection."<sup>12</sup> Here, we can see how the possible danger involved in food-sharing is subverted in favor of the perceived social benefits. Still, even among friends, we find it necessary to alter the pollutive effects of food through prayer and blessing. Saying grace can thus be interpreted as a smaller ritual within food-sharing that serves as a failsafe to ensure that contaminated elements will not penetrate the body.

#### BARGAINING RELATIONSHIPS:

##### *cohesion and identity through food exchange*

There seems to exist an underlying mindset that food has a sense of ownership, which is probably related to the fact that it is necessary for continued health and growth, fostering feelings of value and possession. Property has the potential to eventually translate into a significant means of constructing relationships: "Mauss has shown the pervasive cultural power of the gift, which keeps individuals constantly indebted to each other and continuously engaged in positive interaction through giving and receiving."<sup>13</sup> As individuals exchange gifts, they form obligations to one another and start to rely on a system of repayment. Through the utility of these exchanges, people

begin to identify with one another over the realization that they each have the same fundamental needs. Clearly, when two people actively share food, they remove themselves from its strict purpose of survival and engage in the social act of eating a meal together. In the sharing of this food, they come to realize that they cannot be all that different from each other because they have the same biological needs, and even more so they choose to fulfill them in similar ways. By that same token, it is possible to actually become different by consuming differently.<sup>14</sup> Once two people have identified through shared food practices, the binary opposition between the self and the other breaks down, or at least shifts, so that the view of separateness begins to dissipate and transform into a status of us; the potentially harmful other has been assigned a new interpersonal role of safe familiarity.

In this way, "We still remember that breaking bread and sharing it with friends 'means' friendship itself, and also trust, pleasure, and gratitude in the sharing. Bread as a particular symbol, and food in general, becomes, in its sharing, the actual bond which unites us."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, sharing food is a sign of kinship or closeness, so that accepting food is both a statement to the parameters of two people's relationship as well as a sign of trust. In other words, when one person accepts food from another for the first time, it is a formal action that demonstrates a willing change in the status of the relationship they share. Conversely, reluctance to accept food from another exhibits an unwillingness to alter the current dimensions of interaction, as doing so has further implications about the feelings and obligations that each person has toward the other, as well as what will constitute acceptable exchanges in the future. As Leach remarks, "Our day-to-day relationships depend upon a mutual knowledge and mutual acceptance of the fact that at any particular time any two individuals occupy different positions in a highly complex network of status relationships; ritual serves to reaffirm what these status differences are."<sup>16</sup> However, I argue that ritual can not only serve to reaffirm status relationships but also readjust them.

Take, for example, the typical dating experience. Inevitably, part of the date revolves around eating food of some sort. Essentially, the meal itself is a symbol inasmuch as the type of food that is shared and the circumstances in which it is shared both reflect the level of comfort, commitment, and involvement between the two parties. Therefore, the act of eating food together is a sort of tacit agreement in which the participants show they are willing to review the terms of their relationship. In fact, regardless of the date's outcome, they have already intensified the level of interaction through the gesture of welcoming another into the circle of people with whom they are willing to eat. Or, as Counihan prefers, "Eating together lies at the heart of social relations; at meals we create family and friendships by sharing food, tastes, values, and ourselves."<sup>17</sup> As time progresses, this pair might even shift from the status of being single to dating, or from dating to a committed relationship.

Frequently, announcements preparing others for upcoming change and the process of coordinating decisions within a group of people are set among the backdrop of a meal. The delivery of news such as a marriage acceptance or birth of a child, political speeches, and even plans to relocate domiciles are just a few examples. Clearly, the meal presents an opportunity to strengthen bonds that already exist and possibly even create new ones, as is the case with becoming a father-in-law or a grandmother. Yet even these familial labels possess misleading simplicity. Leach points out, "We do not observe relationships; we observe individuals behaving toward one another in customary, ritually standardized ways, and whatever we have to say about social relationships is . . . an interpretation of these 'ritual' acts."<sup>18</sup> He argues that, in reality, human relationships do not exist concretely in the world but are instead abstract ideas that are manifested in the ways we ritually interact with one another.

Moreover, if we return to our dating scenario, the symbolic aspect of food sharing implies that the degree of formality involved in the meal largely suggests the direction in which the two parties hope

the relationship will progress. A casual meal usually corresponds with the more casual feelings of friendship, possibly even underscoring the ambiguous relationship status existing between two people. When I refer to a meal as casual, I mean a lunch date or meal served in a relatively informal setting that includes a menu with fairly ordinary cuisine. As the feelings between two people intensify, they are willing to move on to more elaborate dining experiences such as dinners held later in the evening in restaurants requiring formalwear with more exotic and expensive items on the menu. I find it interesting how the point at which the meal takes place in the day readily contains such a great deal of meaning; a lunch date is openly and immediately met with the reaction that two people's relationship is not all too serious, perhaps even only platonic. A dinner date, on the other hand, is viewed as a more romantic or personal kind of exchange. While such a reaction may initially seem whimsical, I would suggest that it is in fact a further demonstration of how food and the social context in which it is shared with others defines our personal relationships. Apparently, in our mental catalog of the ideal ritual forms, earlier meals are associated with friendship and later meals with romance. Nighttime, it seems, suggests intimacy. This explains why later meals are traditionally reserved for those with whom we are closest, perhaps because darkness still has the power to instill a degree of fear and uncertainty in us. Therefore, we choose to draw closer to those whom we trust and feel for most out of a need to protect as well as be protected.

#### TO EAT TO THE FULLEST EXTENT:

##### *food and sexuality*

It also does not seem unreasonable to suggest that a late night dinner date even has a sexual edge to it. As the night wears on, our apparent instinct to retreat to the relative safety and familiarity of our

homes merges with the presence of a companion who we met for dinner. One can hardly overlook the fact that when arranging a late and intimate dinner with another person, we are aware of the possibility that the date might encroach on the time of our day typically sanctioned to the bedroom. Obviously, it is far more appropriate to invite someone back to your place after a date ending at midnight than it is to do so after a date ending at four in the afternoon.

The sexual aspect of food sharing perhaps seems like a Freudian figment of my imagination, but it is actually drawn directly from the concepts of pollution and cohesion discussed earlier: "In many cultures there are associations between eating, intercourse, and reproduction. These activities share certain biopsychological attributes that endow them with metaphorical and symbolic identity—particularly their contributions to life and growth, their passing through body boundaries, and their mingling of discrete individuals."<sup>19</sup> This observation is relatively straightforward, so I will draw attention specifically to the fact that the sanctity of the human body is breached during both sexual activity and eating. Surely, one does not even need to imagine the hostility that we believe exists in the world. Time and again, people admit to their fear of opening up to others because they do not want to be hurt. To overcome this fear, both the sharing of bread and the sharing of our bodies must necessarily be grounded in a basis of trust. It follows that with customary, ritually standardized taboos we differentiate between those who can and cannot be trusted, those with whom it is acceptable to eat and have sex. Sexual relationships demonstrate a point at which indebtedness comes to a climax; two interacting individuals identify on a level that makes them resist the binary opposition of self versus other. In order to overcome their psychological and physical distance, they express themselves in as intimate a way as possible, by becoming one. Counihan concurs: "Eating together connotes intimacy, often sexual intimacy or kinship. Both eating and copulation produce social merging."<sup>20</sup>



However, food-sharing and sexual intercourse are not merely considered similar, but are often expressed in ways that they metaphorically interpenetrate one another. The symbolic connection between sex and food is frequently portrayed in our more creative expressions of language such as poetry in which food gifts might lead to sexual liaisons and sex is described through words related to consumption of food. Indeed, “among the Mehinaku Indians, ‘to have sex’ is defined literally as ‘to eat to the fullest extent. . . . The essential idea is that the genitals of one sex are the ‘food’ of the other’s.’ ”<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

### *bringing it all together*

Food-sharing is essentially a rite of intensification; it serves to emphasize, strengthen, and adjust our relationships with others by expressing messages that appeal to our subconscious form of the ideal ritual interaction. Therefore, we do not organize ourselves into groups that share food and conversation out of convenience, but out of the deep-rooted belief that to carry out our social interactions in this way is correct and is as it should be. Abrahams suggests, “By endowing food choice, preparation, and eating with such a symbolic load, cultures invest heavily in themselves whenever they engage in eating. Although we forget such notions most of the time, eating rehearses some of the most basic ways in which the world is given significant order and value.”<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, we largely prefer to not eat alone because eating together offers a chance to express our own identities in relation to others in a deeply intimate—and sometimes even dangerous—way. Food is a form of escape from the monotony of our daily lives by returning to a community in which both physical and social health can be restored. Just as we reconstruct the food-sharing ritual, we

reconstruct our relationships with friends, families, and even strangers. The patterning itself reinforces our proximity to one another and any change in it constitutes a desire to either draw closer or distinguish oneself from the other. In this way, the process of food-sharing possesses a transformative power.



ENDNOTES

1. Carole M. Counihan. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 114.
2. Margaret Visser. *The Rituals of Dinner* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), ix.
3. Emily A Schultz and Robert H. Lavenda *Cultural Anthropology: A Perspective on the Human Condition*, 5th ed. (California: Mayfield, 2001), 145.
4. Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner*, 26.
5. David Hicks, ed. *Ritual and Belief* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), xvii.
6. Edmund R. Leach. "Ritual," Hicks, 119.
7. Susan Kalcik. "Ethnic Food ways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity." *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, ed. Linda K. Brown and Kay Mussel (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 47.
8. Philip Carl Salzman. *Understanding Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theory* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2001), 79-80.
9. Pearl Katz. "Ritual in the Operating Room." *Applying Anthropology*, ed. Aaron Podolefsky and Peter J. Brown (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2001), 343.
10. Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner*, 303.
11. Ibid., 301.
12. Roger Abrahams. "Equal Opportunity Eating: A Structural Excursus on Things of the Mouth." *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, ed. Linda K. Brown and Kay Mussel (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 19.
13. Counihan, *Anthropology of Food*, 14.
14. Ibid., 8.

ENDNOTES (cont.)

15. Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner*, 3.
16. Leach, "Ritual," 119.
17. Counihan, *Anthropology of Food*, 6.
18. Leach, "Ritual," 119
19. Counihan, *Anthropology of Food*, 63.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 9.
22. Abrahams, *Equal Opportunity*, 28.

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# painters and publics

*american art in the first half of the nineteenth century*

SHEILA AUSTRIAN

*Fame cannot be durable where pictures are confined to sitting rooms.*

JOHN SINGLETON COPELY

The spartan economic situation of the early colonies hampered any growth of the fine arts and for more than two centuries literature outshone painting in both accomplishment and prestige. But since the urge for visual expression probably is universal, Americans did paint and artists soon clamored for appropriate attention. With no indigenous art institutions, Americans first looked abroad for instruction and models to emulate. And with no royal patrons, rich churches, or well-heeled business aristocracy, American artists were forced to devise new strategies to support themselves, to convince society that they deserved professional status, and to get their pictures out of sitting rooms. While a few individual artists achieved those three aims, the broader goal of educating the broad American public to a refined artistic sensibility inevitably failed. The public did not turn against painting. Instead, it played its own key role in shaping the direction of American art. Citizens voted with their feet, their pocket books, and their defiantly untrained opinions.

Europe offered the world examples of art organizations that benefited both artists and publics. Since at least the mid-seventeenth cen-

tury, European royalty had sponsored public exhibits of art. Although the visitors sometimes seemed too ignorant, indeed far too vulgar, to appreciate art, the shows did serve as a kind of advertising for the artists, even if the works shown all belonged to the kings. By the eighteenth century, royal art collections often were located in special buildings where they would be more accessible to the public.<sup>1</sup> The British Royal Academy, not established until 1768,<sup>2</sup> offered Americans both potential support and a reminder of colonial inferiority. The Academy's president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, was envied for his talent, his elevated social status, and his two hundred guinea portrait fees.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the Academy's rejection of the portrait as a noble art form and Reynolds' ambitious exhortation to paint the "species and not the individual," must have filled fledgling American artists with feelings of anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

Their political leaders did little to dispel these worries. John Adams fretted that the fine arts might even corrupt, since they were founded on tyranny and "superstition."<sup>5</sup> Charles Willson Peale returned from London unsatisfied with his skill and then was admonished by a patron, Charles Carroll, not to even try miniatures or history paintings, for they took too much skill, cost too much, and weren't suitable for America<sup>6</sup>. Even Thomas Jefferson, the most cultured of Americans, in a 1788 letter thought art might be too costly. "Painting. Statuary. Too expensive for the state of wealth among us," he wrote. "They are worth seeing, but not studying."<sup>7</sup> As Lillian Miller puts it, "morality aside, the patronage of the fine arts, some thought, weakened the capacity of the young country to achieve a measure of economic stability; more important than art was the practice of austerity."<sup>8</sup>

American artists did of course consider how their work might contribute to the nation but, in the late 1700s, they were more concerned with earning a living, a pursuit most likely to succeed through portraiture. Portraits had always been popular in colonial America, but often only as "mementos of the dead or gestures of respect and affection for the living," with the name of the painter far less impor-



tant than that of the sitter.<sup>9</sup> Artists naturally chafed at the restrictions on their talent and imagination. John Singleton Copley complained that “the people generally regard it no more than any other useful trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of a Carpenter tailor, or shew maker, not as one of the most noble Arts in the world.”<sup>10</sup> Gilbert Stuart found his American sitters far too demanding, for they dictated poses and demanded exact accuracy. In Europe, he said, his portraits were compared with “Vandyck, Titian and other great painters—but here they compare them with the works of the Almighty.”<sup>11</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, Samuel F. B. Morse would find Charleston patrons willing to pay a generous \$80 for a flattering portrait but equally insistent on getting their money’s worth. John Ashe Alston commissioned nineteen family portraits from Morse, for which he specified pose of body, head, hands, the frame, color of dress, the background landscape, and even the buttons.<sup>12</sup> A few years earlier, just returned from study in England, Morse had tried a more personal and honest style when he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the former president, John Adams, in 1815. Morse showed the elderly Adams as an atrophied husk of a man, hardly the image expected for a series on distinguished American heroes. It was quickly pulled from the public show and Morse was told that Thomas Sully and Charles Bird King had warned that it would do him “essential injury as an artist if longer exhibited.”<sup>13</sup> Morse had refused to be another Gilbert Stuart and it had taken him years (and a little less honesty) to recover his career.

No wonder America’s best colonial painters, Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, had moved to London. Portraits still paid their bills but they gained fame from large and dramatic history paintings. They also seemed to have carried along some Yankee hustle in their business dealings. The Swiss-English painter Henry Fuseli certainly felt threatened when he wrote, at a time when public exhibition was beginning to supplant royal patronage,

*There are, says Mr. West, 'but two ways of working successfully, that is, lastingly, in this country, for an artist—the one is, to paint for the King; the other, to mediate a scheme of your own.' The first he has monopolized; in the second he is not idle.*<sup>14</sup>

Since West earned about £23,000 from the exhibit, sale, and engravings of *The Death of General Wolfe*, Fuseli seemed to have a legitimate gripe.<sup>15</sup> Susan Rather describes Copley as rather more like his “self-satisfied portrait subjects than he would have liked to admit,”<sup>16</sup> but credits him with a sharp judgment of public taste. His patriotic and emotional *Death of the Earl of Chatham* was painted after advertising subscriptions in 1780 for an engraving of the to-be-painted work. He then showed the painting, with an optional programme listing all the people shown, at the Spring Garden, where it drew 20,000 during a six-week pay-to-view exhibit. It also earned him the wrath of the Royal Academy, which blamed him for the £1,000 loss of its own exhibit, which was held during the same period.<sup>17</sup>

Across the Atlantic, artists felt self-consciously lacking in arts of all sorts. As late as 1820 a British visitor, Henry B. Fearon, asked readers of the *Edinburgh Review*, “who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?”<sup>18</sup> Despite the paucity of patronage and resources, American intellectuals rallied in support, invoking practical as well as philosophical arguments. The arts, they argued, would privilege moral values rather than competitive consumption, provide education for the imagination, improve character, reduce stress, and, in the process, inculcate taste in the citizenry. Taste was illusive but learnable; it might also serve to develop national identity and loyalty.<sup>19</sup> And much of the non-portrait art of the early nineteenth century mirrored these ideas. Avoiding documentary comment on slavery, poverty, or other social ills, popular painters tended to the heroic or the pastoral, depicting “the American character not only as it actually existed, but also as it aspired to be.”<sup>20</sup>

American artists may have lacked the financial and professional framework of the European academies and salons, but they consequently were spared the sometimes suffocating burden of conformity to established norms. Even though this freedom ultimately enriched American art and culture, it of course caused severe financial and aesthetic difficulties for the practitioners. For the painters had to somehow convince the public to validate their visions through purchase of paintings or engravings, by informed criticism, civic or governmental commissions, and by paying modest sums to attend art exhibits open to the general public. Artists became entrepreneurs, some more adept than others, and while no model was truly successful, nineteenth century America developed indigenous answers to the state-supported European academies.

By the 1820s, the art market was thriving, even if the rationale for purchasing remained unclear. Some newly wealthy bought art to gain social status within the old money crowd. The more astute often preferred to buy American, perhaps to save money, but more likely in fear that they would be duped into purchasing fake old masters. Luman Reed, a genuine art lover who made his fortune in the grocery business, was one of the first and most helpful of the new art patrons.<sup>21</sup> Reed provided scholarships for European study and regularly opened his private gallery to the public. His early death in 1836 was a real blow to the development of American art.<sup>22</sup> Newly rich patrons might also have been more likely to help artists achieve the public recognition and social status they craved than would have members of the old money elite. Samuel Morse worried, however, that any patronage could too easily turn into charity if the purchaser did not truly love the painting and the thought behind it. "Who," he asked, "purchases a coat or a table, or a book, to encourage the tailor, the cabinetmaker or the bookseller?"<sup>23</sup> Morse was one of the very finest American painters of the nineteenth century—and ultimately one of the least successful. Refusing to pander to public taste, he quit paint-

ing entirely rather than compromise his intellectual and aesthetic principles. His contemporary, William Sidney Mount, also knew his classical art history but achieved fame by painting sometimes lowbrow genre pictures. "Paint pictures that will take with the public," he wrote in his diary. "In other words, never paint for the few, but for the many. Some artists remain in the corner by not observing the above."<sup>24</sup>

Artists had become ever more inventive in their search for a way out of the corner. Charles Willson Peale, a man of wide intelligence, broadened art to include far more than painting. He devised popular patriotic displays featuring "transparencies;" constructed parade floats, one of which featured a mechanical George Washington lifting a laurel wreath from his head; and concocted a 1783 victory arch that ignited accidentally, sending up seven hundred rockets in a spectacular explosion that badly injured the artist. Two years later, Peale put together moving pictures of a sea battle, complete with waves, moonlight, and booming cannons. He lost money on these projects but he, and the public, must have had a lot of fun.<sup>25</sup>

Peale attempted a more serious artistic endeavor with his 1795 *Columbianum*, a cooperative association of artists, carvers, architects, engravers, and other Philadelphians who considered themselves artists. Unfortunately, the *Columbianum* survived for less than a year because it could not satisfy the needs of a group split between those who wanted a more exclusive, academy-like organization and those who found that goal too elitist, too European, and not likely to bring them more customers.<sup>26</sup> Peale had also opened a personal art and natural history museum,<sup>27</sup> an institution his son Rubens tried to replicate in New York in 1825 to coincide with the opening of the Erie Canal. While the New York version was more of a freak show than an art museum, it pretended to educational aims and society then judged art more on the division between respectable and immoral than on differences between high and low.<sup>28</sup> Oliver Larkin, one of the doyens of American art history, was particularly fond of the whole Peale family, who "often succeeded where others failed... because they did not

scorn what Reynolds had called 'the vulgarism of ordinary life.'"<sup>29</sup>

Peale was not the only artist to look for a museum-like solution. Europe offered tantalizing examples, especially in the cities that had turned royal collections into public museums, often arranged in chronological order and offering a didactic education in art history. American galleries had fewer resources and simpler objectives; they usually tended to display works on a common theme or the oeuvre of a single artist.<sup>30</sup> In 1829, the Boston businessman Samuel A. Eliot wishfully urged the public to spend their recreation dollars on "the innocent. . . galleries of painting and sculpture" rather than on cruel and vulgar activities like "bull-baiting, bear-baiting, and prize rings."<sup>31</sup> Other, often anti-Catholic, observers worried that art exhibits might actually promote sin and depravity by displaying erotically charged scenes of violence, which were of course most popular with the general public.<sup>32</sup>

John Vanderlyn hoped the European fad for panoramic displays could make him rich in America. He built his Rotunda in New York City in 1818 and installed his gigantic Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles the next year. It was a bitter failure, for he was a poor businessman and the public did not respond to his European theme depicting only the unfamiliar Louis XVIII, Tsar Alexander I, and King Frederick William III. Vanderlyn added more and more people but the critics still found the huge canvas too bare and impersonal. After two months, Vanderlyn was forced to replace it with a panoramic View of Hell and business picked up.<sup>33</sup> When simple panoramas had lost their punch, they were supplanted by the moving panoramas that were part art, part theater, and often travelogues on American themes. According to Charles Lanman, they were designed to "pamper national vanity."<sup>34</sup> A prime example was John Banvard's Mississippi from the Mouth of the Missouri to New Orleans, which opened in Louisville in 1846 and toured to Boston, New York City, and London. Viewers were seated in "boats" as the canvases rolled by on each side while an actor provided commentary on the passing landscape.<sup>35</sup> These panoramas certainly were not "high" art but they

did pull in many thousands of paying customers and gave employment to painters, if not artists.

A real boat, the Hudson River steamer Albany, offered passengers a truly fine art gallery when it entered service in 1827. The owners, perhaps assisted by Samuel F. B. Morse, had commissioned twelve paintings for the Albany's main cabin, hoping that the gallery would give their luxury boat a marketing advantage on a highly competitive route. The artists, Thomas Birch, Thomas Doughty, Thomas Cole, Charles Lawrence, John Vanderlyn, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Thomas Sully, were probably paid \$150 for each painting. This was more than most of them charged and especially generous considering the thousands of wealthy passengers who would spend about ten hours looking at their work. (Vanderlyn's contribution, a version of his *Ariadne*, was withdrawn in 1828, probably because passengers complained about its nudity.) We do not know how many passengers might have subsequently commissioned paintings from these artists, but the exposure almost certainly helped their careers.<sup>36</sup>

Other artists looked, usually in vain, to the federal and state governments for commissions, arguing that a new nation needed appropriate art for its public buildings. John Vanderlyn argued for a national picture gallery (with himself as curator) and Samuel F. B. Morse suggested that the Library of Congress should take responsibility for commissioning Rotunda paintings.<sup>37</sup> Congress had appropriated funds for Latrobe's Capitol building but then hectored him unmercifully, especially when his reconstruction after the War of 1812 exceeded the budget.<sup>38</sup> Public opinion was an important reason for the paucity of national commissions, for the Washington, D.C. population was minuscule and voters begrudged expenditures outside their own districts. Neil Harris points out that the press pushed the government to commemorate great national events and then complained even more loudly about the expense, the delays, and the art itself, which was chosen by politicians and not by art experts. There was a scandal when the public learned that Horatio Greenough's statue of Washington

cost \$30,000 and many artists decided that competing for federal commissions was a waste of their time.<sup>39</sup>

John Trumbull, however, was not daunted. The son of a governor, he had excellent connections and the strong conviction that he should be commissioned to carry out large history paintings for the Capitol Rotunda. He even devised a complicated plan for selling engravings to fund the project. While successful in securing the commission, Trumbull was sharply criticized for abusing the taxpayer's trust by showing his paintings commercially before they were installed.<sup>40</sup> Other artists were of course envious of his \$32,000 award and the additional \$4,000 he had earned from pay-per-view exhibitions in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore that had attracted upwards of 21,000 people. Critics praised Trumbull's paintings but the public judgment was harsher, for there was little drama or conflict in his representations of good government.<sup>41</sup> Aside from the Capitol commissions, the federal government made a firm policy of avoiding involvement in the arts. It never established a coordinated policy for commissions and handled any purchases on a case-by-case basis.<sup>42</sup> The federal government did hire artists to record facets of Indian life, but these commissions were undertaken by the Department of War and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and were not thought of as support for the fine arts. Luckily, excellent artists like Charles Bird King and George Catlin painted evocative and sympathetic portraits of a disappearing culture.<sup>43</sup>

Artists, growing in number and expertise, gradually looked to professional associations to improve their status and finances. Facing an anti-art government policy in a nation where the Protestant churches saw no need for artistic embellishments, private patronage seemed the only solution. And although there were a few rich patrons like Luman Reed, artists would have to convince upper middle class citizens that art was as important a part of cultured life as books or music. This required something of a mind shift, for collecting art, unlike amassing a personal library, was a very new idea for most Americans. And how

could people know what was good art? Should they rely on the artists' own claims, on self-appointed art critics, or use their own common sense? Since neither the artists nor the critics really trusted the untutored public, the situation was unsettled. The author James Fenimore Cooper, a major art patron himself, captured this dilemma, warning in 1836 that in America, "every man swaggers and talks, knowledge or no knowledge; brains or no brains; taste or no taste." Art, he said, would be judged like "pork, and rum, and cotton. . . . Sell them your wares and shut your ears."<sup>44</sup>

New York was rapidly becoming the art center of America by the 1820s. Its first major organization, the American Academy of Fine Arts, grew from Robert R. Livingston's 1801 proposal to his brother, the mayor of New York, to establish a subscription to purchase copies and plaster casts of famous European paintings and sculptures. The academy founders, although worthy men and genuine art lovers, seemed to think that once these copies were brought to America, a new generation of artists might spring up spontaneously. Unfortunately, they had no teaching program, no permanent exhibit hall, and little interest in actually helping American artists.<sup>45</sup> The Academy revived after Livingston's death in 1813, when DeWitt Clinton secured New York's former Alms House as an exhibit space. Taking advantage of the post-War of 1812 nationalistic fervor, the Academy opened a major public exhibit on October 25, 1816. The show contained works from members' private collections as well as Academy purchases, and included new and interesting paintings by Benjamin West, Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull, and many other European and American artists.<sup>46</sup>

Although most historians describe the Academy as stodgy and anachronistic, even after John Trumbull took over leadership with a reform agenda, Carrie Barratt provides a more generous evaluation. She admits the Academy's acquisition policy was too inclusive and contained much that was fake and shoddy but argues that collecting had to start somewhere. The more serious problem was the lack of curatorial knowledge. Trumbull claimed Old Masters expertise but



nobody in early nineteenth America could judge, identify, authenticate, and contextualize the corpus of classical and European art. Barratt explains that “in the 1820s and 1830s the American Academy opened the market, took risks, and ultimately presented in microcosm all the elements of the vital, multi-faceted, complicated art scene that burgeoned in the following decades.”<sup>47</sup>

From 1828 to 1839, the American Academy of Fine Arts sponsored nine Old Master shows “ranging in character from irreproachable to criminal,”<sup>48</sup> but faced increasing press hostility and competition from other commercial exhibits. By 1828, the annual exhibit’s revenues were only \$585.20, about half what they had been a few years earlier; in contrast, a competing 1830 exhibit of dubious “Best Pictures from the Old Masters” took in \$4,090. Still, the Academy operated as much as a market as it did a public gallery and Trumbull, embracing the commercial side of art, never worried that auctions sullied art’s moral purpose. His 1828–29 show of 200 Italian paintings owned by Antonio Sarti pulled in 2,000 viewers the first two weeks and even more when the owner decided to auction off his property at the end of the show. Samuel F. B. Morse said the Sarti pictures were “for the most part execrable trash, the vile daubings of old picture manufacturers or the rude copies of students, good, bad, and indifferent,”<sup>50</sup> but the public still snapped them up.

In direct competition with the American Academy, in 1826 artists finally decided they needed their own professional institution and organized the National Academy of Design. Led by Samuel F. B. Morse from 1826 – 1845, the National was governed by thirty leading artists and theorists, who in turn elected associate members, arranged art classes and lectures, and selected the works to be shown in annual exhibits. While not primarily a marketing venue, the National of course wanted to increase artists’ social prestige and made sure that potential patrons were nominated as associates and that portraits of patrons were included in exhibits.<sup>51</sup> One of the National’s important innovations was a rudimentary research library to give students access to expen-

sive European art books and periodicals. Classes were cheap and frequent lectures provided a genuine marketplace for ideas and talent. While the exhibits eventually became so popular that they had to be juried, the goal was to include as many different artists as possible.<sup>52</sup>

Another type of art institution, the non-profit American Art-Union, was even more accessible to the general public and rapidly became the most important market for all kinds of paintings except portraits. Founded in 1839, the Union sold \$5 subscriptions that included the yearly engraving, brochures and newsletters about the art that had been purchased, entry to exhibits, and a chance to win one of the originals in the annual lottery. At its most successful, the American Art-Union purchased about four hundred paintings each year for distribution to almost twenty thousand subscribers.<sup>53</sup> In its thirteen years of existence, about three million people attended Art-Union exhibits featuring new paintings by famous as well as unknown American artists.<sup>54</sup>

Art-Union paintings were selected by rotating committees with eclectic tastes, but most of the 2,481 works purchased from more than three hundred artists were small enough to hang in a normal room. New artists were often encouraged to start with still lifes. Among the most popular subjects were landscapes, pictures of everyday life (especially if they stimulated thought and discussion on moral topics), western genre scenes, and “ideal” pictures about universal verities. Naturally, there was tension between the Union’s managers, who wanted to purchase good art for low prices, and the artists, good and indifferent, who realized the Union was a marvelous source of patronage. The Union, insisting that artists could not properly evaluate the worth or value of their paintings or dictate the subject matter, could be quite blunt in defending its policies. An 1849 rejectee must have been dismayed at a Union manager’s advice that “your misfortune consists in not being competent to judge the merits of your own productions and in having friends who are not [honest] enough to tell you the truth.”<sup>55</sup>

Although the American Art-Union did buy plenty of second and third-rate art in order to offer more prizes, some winners received incredible works of art. The most fabulous prize certainly was Thomas Cole's four-picture series, *The Voyage of Life*, awarded in December, 1848.<sup>56</sup> Subscriptions almost doubled when Art-Union publications bragged that \$6,000 had been paid for the work. Managers, realizing that their exhibitions were more important as advertising than as a source of revenue, added evening hours, abolished the twenty-five cent entry fee, and decorated the gallery more elegantly. This strategy was a huge success: half a million people came to the Art-Union's gallery in 1848 and the organization claimed 750,00 visitors in 1849. The *New York Literary World* approved, telling its readers "the Art-Union. . . invited all the world into its parlor, and provided ottomans, gas lights, and fine pictures for its entertainment..."<sup>57</sup>

Both Lillian Miller and Rachel Klein confirm that while women were encouraged to attend these exhibits, the American art world was an almost exclusively male preserve during the first half of the nineteenth century. Certainly, the American Art-Union "embodied the managers' gendered vision of public virtue."<sup>58</sup> Klein finds it especially interesting that the yearly engravings almost always addressed a masculine theme, like *Bargaining for a Horse* by William Sidney Mount or *The Jolly Flatboatmen* by George Caleb Bingham. Only three of the twenty-three Union engravings showed domestic interiors and in these women assume subsidiary positions, such as in Richard Caton Woodville's *Old '76 and Young '48*. Stirrings of female assertiveness may have influenced the culturally conservative leaders of the Art-Union to promote traditional and patriarchal images of womanly behavior. One result of America's new wealth was the growing gap between work place and home, with men working long hours in office buildings and women spending more of the family budget on larger residences and beginning to become active in culture and philanthropy.<sup>59</sup>

Gender issues also got caught up in the political and aesthetic arguments of an increasingly competitive art market in the middle 1800s. The American Art-Union claimed that its main competitor, the commercial International Art-Union, would distribute immoral French pictures, especially sensual paintings of women that would stimulate lascivious thoughts and might corrupt honest Americans.<sup>60</sup> The International Art-Union countered that the vulgar patrons at the American Art-Union's free gallery caused disturbances "which compelled the [AA-U] Committee at one time to remove the sofas from the hall." The nature of the disturbance was not spelled out, but there was a strong suggestion that good families should not let their daughters attend AA-U shows lest they rub shoulders with prostitutes.<sup>61</sup> The International Art-Union was certainly "guilty" of introducing sensuality into its exhibits, which frequently featured the most popular artist of the nineteenth century, the Frenchman Claude-Marie Dubufe, a student of David. His twice life size pictures of Adam and Eve, more naked than nude, drew huge crowds that at least pretended to find them moralistic. The IA-U was trying to make money in a city where dioramas, panoramas, peep-shows, and other entertainments also called themselves "art," where great paintings could be found in shabby shops, and terrible fakes posed as the real thing in fancy galleries. The art scene was extraordinarily fluid.<sup>62</sup>

Aside from the fight over market share, the real battle concerned the ultimate purpose of art itself. Although there was of course some overlap, one side thought that art should be as broadly inclusive as possible, with a duty to uplift all parts of society to a higher moral and patriotic plane. Not for profit institutions were preferable to speculative commercial markets, good American subject matter was as important as good painting, and laymen like the managers of the American Art-Union were most likely to achieve these goals. Ideas of Manifest Destiny were entwined in this viewpoint, as expressed by an AA-U official J. T. Hoadley in 1845:

*Someone has said, give me the writing of the songs of a country and you may make its laws. I had almost said, give me the control of the art of a country, and you may have the management of its administration... Pictures are more powerful than speeches.*<sup>63</sup>

Opposing this opinion were those who believed that both quality and good taste were in short supply and should be cultivated by the experts and educated classes able to appreciate high culture. Women were welcome members of this inner republic, for, as an article in the women's magazine *Home Journal* put it, "the elevation and purity of the moral tone of a nation may be pretty exactly estimated from the social position and influence enjoyed by women."<sup>64</sup>

American artists, of course, just wanted to paint what pleased them and to receive as much public and monetary recognition as possible. The American Art-Union provided sheltering if sometimes paternalistic support whereas the more market-driven International Art-Union forced them to compete with European imports. There were of course many privately arranged commissions and numerous commercial galleries as well. In the end, largely because of a campaign waged in New York's penny press newspapers, the whole art lottery concept was ruled unconstitutional by the New York Supreme Court in 1852. This was an almost crushing blow to artists and the middle-class art lovers who had valued the engravings and the hope of winning an original more highly than the wagering thrill of the lottery. "I suppose you have heard of the downfall of the Art-Union," wrote Lilly Martin Spencer, who had sold eight paintings to the AA-U, "which, although it was not a very good institution, still it was better than nothing."<sup>65</sup>

Private patronage once again became almost the only way for painters to make a living from their art. Luckily, there were more and more wealthy art lovers, some of whom opened their personal galleries to the public. Still, we may be almost certain that these publics

probably came by invitation and did not include tradesmen and school children. Some painters, most notably Frederick Church and Albert Bierstadt,<sup>66</sup> later won almost as much acclaim for their business acumen and high fees as for their "Great Pictures." But the ideal of art as the "glue" for a common and socially cohesive culture could not survive the growth of northern cities, the politically divisive issue of slavery, massive immigration, class rifts, and the total unwillingness of the American public to let others decide what would be good for them.<sup>67</sup>

Not until well after the Civil War would the United States find answers to the problem posed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who thought it almost obscene for an individual to "own" works of art that should be part of the common cultural heritage. In *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson posited that "how to give all access to the masterpieces of art and nature is the problem of civilization."<sup>68</sup> Periodicals, newspapers, and cultural leaders frequently urged the government, or the states, or civic-minded rich people to establish permanent art collections. Whether these institutions should be genuinely public was another question, for there was growing fear of the "sovereigns," a put-down term for the uppity working classes. "In some minds then," as Dell Upton describes the mood, "art was transformed from a medium for reinforcing ties of republican citizenship to a medium for cultivating and demonstrating personal urbanity."<sup>69</sup>

In any case, there were few volunteers to fund such a museum until John Jay, a wealthy American Art-Union supporter organized an 1869 meeting that launched a campaign to establish the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Marvelous as it is, the Metropolitan was not conceived as a free, public, and instructional institution. It maintained strict rules of proper behavior, had limited evening and week-end hours, concentrated on the Old Masters, and was funded by wealthy trustees who ran the museum as a "preserve of excellence" for the

elite.<sup>70</sup> Although American painters had achieved artistic parity with their European colleagues, they still had found no sure way to get their artistic visions off those sitting room walls.



ENDNOTES

1. Oskar Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict Between Market and Self-Expression* (Cologne: DuMont, 1997), 12-16.
2. Batschmann, *Artist in the Modern World*, 25. In England too, painting lagged behind literature.
3. Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years 1790-1860* (New York: George Braziller, 1966), 11. Reynolds left an estate valued at over £100,000, a huge fortune at that time.
4. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 12.
5. Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 13. During the Revolution, Adams did urge art to "assist in perpetuating to posterity the horrid deeds of our enemies." (from Harris, 13, who quotes from Zoltan Haraszti, *John Adams and the Prophets of Progress*, 1952, p. 59.)
6. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 8.
7. Robert Hughes, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (London: Harvill, 1997), 109.
8. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 13.
9. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 7.
10. Susan Rather, "Carpenter, Tailor, Shoemaker, Artist: Copley and Portrait Painting Around 1770," *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997): 269.
11. William T. Whitley, *Gilbert Stuart* (Cambridge, 1938), 89, quoted in Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 58-59.
12. Paul J. Staiti, Samuel F. B. Morse. *Cambridge Monographs on American Artists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 53-55.
13. Staiti, *Morse*, 34-36.
14. Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World*, 9.
15. *Ibid.*, 54.
16. Rather, "Carpenter, Tailor, Shoemaker, Artist," 7.
17. Batschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World*, 31.



18. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 11.
19. Ibid., 21.
20. Lillian B. Miller, "Paintings, Sculpture, and the National Character, 1815-1860," *The Journal of American History*, 53 (1967): 704.
21. Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilizations and Urbanity in Antebellum New York," in Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds. *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 37.
22. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 106.
23. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 105. (from an 1833 letter to De Witt Bloodgood)
24. Staiti, *Morse*, 236.
25. Hughes, *American Visions*, 98-99. I wonder if Peale knew about the classical reenactments of naval battles that were staged in flooded outdoor theaters?
26. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 91.
27. Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 116. Peale first opened to the public in 1786; the collection eventually was moved to Independence Hall in 1802 and was renamed the Philadelphia Museum in 1822.
28. Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis," 25-26.
29. Oliver W. Larkin, *Art and Life in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 135.
30. Kenneth John Myers, "Art and Commerce in Jacksonian America: The Steamship Albany Collection," *Art Bulletin*, 82 (2000), 503-529.
31. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 20-21.
32. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 13. Batschmann describes Jacques-Louis David's 1799 Sabine Women as a conscious choice to shock and titillate. Made as an *exposition payante*, it purported to advance a classical appeal for peace but was brutal and included

ENDNOTES (cont.)

male nudity (very racy at that time). Batschmann doesn't tell us how much David earned from showing the picture, but believes he actually hoped a press scandal would provide free advertising.

33. Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (New York: Harry Abrams, 1999), 56.

34. Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 222.

35. Comment, *Painted Panorama*, 63-64

36. Myers, "Art and Commerce," 503-529.

37. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 38.

38. *Ibid.*, 42-44.

39. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 100-101.

40. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 46-47.

41. Staiti, *Morse*, 74.

42. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 38-39.

43. Julie Schimmel, "Inventing 'the Indian,'" in William H. Truettner, ed. *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 151-152.

44. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 100.

45. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 91-95.

46. *Ibid.*, 95-96.

47. Baratt, "Mapping the Venues," 50-51.

48. *Ibid.*, 51.

49. Baratt, "Mapping the Venues," 51.

50. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 98.

51. Rachel N. Klein, "Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art Union," *The Journal of American History* 81 (1995), 1536.

52. Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 100-101.

53. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1534.

54. Patricia Hills, "Picturing Progress in the Era of Western Expansion," in *The West as America*, 104-106.
55. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1541-42.
56. Baratt, "Mapping the Venues," 59.
57. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1546-47. Since the 1850 census recorded New York City's 1850 population as only slightly over 500,000, these claims, if true, are quite impressive.
58. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1545 and Miller, "Paintings, Sculpture, and the National Character," 706.
59. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1542-46.
60. Ibid., 1549.
61. Ibid., 1552.
62. Barratt, "Mapping the Venues," 55-56.
63. Harris, *Artist in American Society*, 183 and Hills, "Picturing Progress," 102. The general discussion of the role of art in society figures in many of the works cited, particularly those by Harris, Klein, and Miller.
64. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1550, quoting "Women and Literature," *Home Journal*, Aug. 5, 1848, 2.
65. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1559
66. See Nancy K. Anderson and Linda S. Ferber, *Albert Bierstadt: Art and Enterprise* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1990), for an excellent discussion of art in the "gilded age," which is sadly beyond the scope of this essay.
67. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1560.
68. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Wealth," *The Conduct of Life*, Boston & New York, 1860, 700-701, in Miller, *Patrons and Patriots*, 87.
69. Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York," Voorsanger, *Art and the Empire City*, 1-46, 36.
70. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1560.

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# san bartolo coyotepec, mexico

*a photo essay*

CHRISTINA GRANBERG

**M**y two-week research project in documentary photography in San Bartolo chronicled the preparations and customary arrangements for the First Holy Communion of one son, capturing the daily rituals and religious festivities of two families in the region. Supplies were bought, a goat selected for the feast, a tent raised for the fiesta, and countless hours of cooking by the female members of the family. The agreement that allowed me to become involved in the celebration was in part my ability to give the family photographs of the event. This overjoyed them, and permitted me to witness and photograph each step of the process, from the kitchen to the church, and then finally the fiesta following the religious ceremony. The end product is a story told visually, joining the elements of detail, frame, and timing together.









Christina Granberg

*Girls in the Shade*

San Bartolo Coyotepec, Mexico

Gelatin silver print, 5<sup>3/4</sup> x 8<sup>1/2</sup>





Christina Granberg  
*Cross and Coca-Cola*  
San Bartolo Coyotepec, Mexico  
Gelatin silver print, 5<sup>3/4</sup> x 8<sup>1/2</sup>





Christina Granberg

*Doorway*

*San Bartolo Coyotepec, Mexico*

Gelatin silver print, 5<sup>3/4</sup> x 8<sup>1/2</sup>





Christina Granberg

*Family*

*San Bartolo Coyotepec, Mexico*

*Gelatin silver print, 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>*





# sa'a naghai bik'e hozho

*the evidence of balance and harmony in the navajo lexicon*

JENNY HOFFMAN

*Sa'a naghai bik'e hozho, I have become*

*Sa'a naghai bik'e hozho<sup>1</sup>*

*Perfection*

*I have become again as I have (and do) repeatedly become.*

*Things all around... are "beautiful" again.<sup>2</sup>*

This Navajo blessing, *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho*,<sup>3</sup> is central to Navajo culture<sup>4</sup> and is reflected through every aspect of their life—from their language and poetry, to their textiles and sandpaintings. “Nearly every song and prayer in the elaborate Navajo ceremonial system uses *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* in its benediction,”<sup>5</sup> suggesting its significance. The importance of this blessing is also particularly evident within the Navajo language, which the Navajo call *dine bizaad*.<sup>6</sup> To illustrate, this paper will analyze both the core ideas of *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* and how they are reflected within the Navajo language—particularly in the Navajo lexicon. By doing so, it will become evident that the Navajo concepts of balance and harmony are central in both.

Before any analysis of the Navajo lexicon can take place, a working translation of the blessing *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* itself is needed. This is no easy task, for the importance of this phrase makes it no easier to translate or understand. In order to understand the basic

meaning of this phrase, one must either be one of the Navajo people (who call themselves the *dine*),<sup>7</sup> live among the *dine*, or wade through the interpretations already suggested by earlier scholars. Indeed, many scholars over the years have poured forth their ideas on this subject, and each definition varies. The ideas of three individuals seem to dominate the field: Father Berard Haile, Gary Witherspoon, and John Farella. These men all lived with the Navajo, using ethnographic techniques and collaborating with the Navajo themselves in order to come to their conclusions. Although they do not completely agree, they all uphold *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* as a vital part of the Navajo worldview.

Father Berard Haile was one of the first researchers to do an in-depth study of this blessing. In *Starlore Among the Navajo*, Haile takes a strictly literal approach and translates *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* as meaning, "The one who is long life directs pleasant conditions."<sup>8</sup> He comes to this conclusion by arguing that *Sa'a Naghai*, who is a mythological figure, is "symbolic of old age or long life."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, *Bik'e Hozho*, also a mythological figure and counterpart to *Sa'a Naghai*, is "symbolic of happiness and peace."<sup>10</sup> By translating this in this way, Haile shows certain ideas that the Navajo hold important in their worldview: long life, happiness, and peace—thus making it a vital part of their culture. This definition, which was one of the first, also became one of the most popular; many other academics of his time accepted it immediately. His influence was by no means short-lived, for his translation still echoes in later works.

Not all agree with Haile, however. Gary Witherspoon, who speaks on this subject extensively in both *Central Concepts of the Navajo World View* (1975) and *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* (1977), feels that Haile's translation was "grossly inadequate."<sup>11</sup> In place of Haile's definition, Witherspoon embarks on an etymological quest, examining the history and meaning of each element of this blessing. He concludes that *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* embodies the ultimate goal of Navajo life: "to live to maturity in the condition described as *hozho*.

and to die of old age, the end result of which incorporates one into universal beauty, harmony, and happiness”<sup>12</sup>—the beauty, harmony, and happiness of *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho*. He further states that the elements of this blessing are “the central animating powers of the universe.”<sup>13</sup> Through his definition, Witherspoon endows this concept with an extreme amount of both cultural and creationistic power. This ascribes even more cultural significance to this blessing than is found within Haile’s work.

However, Witherspoon’s ideas are not above criticism. John Farella, in his work *The Main Stalk*, states that Witherspoon’s “reduction [of *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho*] to etymology misses the mark completely.”<sup>14</sup> Instead, Farella believes it is important to look at the blessing as both an entity and a synthesis of Navajo culture itself. In so doing, he describes *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho* as “completeness.”<sup>15</sup> This completeness, he argues, is invaluable to the *dine*; they view completeness as “being a part of the past, the future, and of the world around us.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Farella, too, ascribes this phrase with cultural significance—a cultural significance that varies from that of Witherspoon and Haile.

Looking at the definitions proposed by these three scholars, two points become prominent. First, it becomes obvious that although they all agree that this is an important phrase, they could not agree on the meaning of the blessing itself. From this proceeds the second point, a point that deals with this paper directly. As no one can agree on its definition, if one desires to write of *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho*, it is paramount first to establish a working definition for the phrase. To institute such a translation is both to lay the foundation and clearly define the parameters for any subsequent arguments.

For the purposes of my research, I propose a synthesis of these three translations. Such a synthesis is first possible based on the validity of their work. It is evident that their ideas are equally convincing; they support their arguments using valid data that they gained from similar research methods. Furthermore, their definitions are not mu-

tually exclusive. While they do focus on different areas, there are key elements that are present in each translation: the idea of living a long life and dying of old age, and the importance of beauty, harmony, and balance (*hozho*). I believe Haile had an important insight when he first connected the mythological figure *Sa'a Naghai* and his counterpart *Bik'e Hozho* to long life and happiness, respectively. Witherspoon also made an important point when he stated that this phrase expresses the goal of the Navajo to live to old age and live a life of *hozho*, thereby achieving beauty, harmony, and happiness. Such a state of *hozho* can then be seen as completeness—Farella's idea. Through combining these major elements, I propose the following definition of *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho*: to live a long life and to die of old age in the condition of beauty, harmony, and balance (*hozho*), thereby achieving a state of completeness with the universe. In this definition, the concepts of balance and harmony are essential to the Navajo worldview.

The completeness evident in *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* that results from harmony and balance are evident not only in this blessing, but also in other areas of *dine* life. One such area is the language of the Navajo, *dine bizaad*. To the *dine*, language and words have a creative power; through words, things are spoken into existence and the world can be changed. Based on the importance of this element, it seems natural to conclude that one of the central blessings of the people, *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho*, should therefore be reflected in it. This indeed can be supported by an analysis of the Navajo lexicon. The central concept of *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* can be seen through the static and dynamic elements in the *dine bizaad* lexicon, creating the *hozho* state of completeness.

Before the presence of the principles of *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* can be fully discussed in terms of the Navajo language, however, it is first important to understand the *dine* perception of *dine bizaad*. The

Navajo do not view their language as simply a means of communication. Rather, it is a creative force, an aspect of *nilchi*—the Holy Wind<sup>17</sup> that the Navajo believe gives “life, thought, speech, and the power of motion to all living things and serves as a means of communication between all elements of the living world.”<sup>18</sup> It is this Holy Wind that lives within each person, connecting them to the universe. This presence is called the *nilch’i hwii’siziinii*, often translated as the “in-standing Wind Soul”<sup>19</sup> or “the Wind within one.”<sup>20</sup> It is this “Wind within one” that brings about thought, which brings about speech. Speech then causes creation. This concept is particularly well-illustrated in the Navajo creation myth; according to the Navajo, the world was brought into being by the *Diyin Dine’e* (often translated as “gods” or “supernaturals”),<sup>21</sup> who thought the world into existence.<sup>22</sup> This can be seen in the “Beginning of the World Song,” recorded by Mary Wheelwright and here translated by Gary Witherspoon:

FIRST VERSE:            *The earth will be,  
                                      the mountains will be,  
                                      (and so on, mentioning other things to be)*

SECOND VERSE:        *The earth will be, from ancient  
                                      times with me there is knowledge of it.  
                                      The mountains will be, from ancient  
                                      times there is knowledge of it.  
                                      (and so on)*

THIRD VERSE:         *The earth will be, from the very  
                                      beginning I have thought it.  
                                      The mountains will be, from the very  
                                      beginning I have thought it.  
                                      (and so on)*

FOURTH VERSE:       *The earth will be, from ancient times*  
                              *I speak it.*  
                              *The mountains will be, from ancient times*  
                              *I speak it.*  
                              (and so on)

FIFTH VERSE:       (The fifth verse is a repetition of the first  
                              verse, rendering the sense “and so it will  
                              be” or “and thus is will be done.”)<sup>23</sup>

In this passage, the progression from knowledge to thought to speech to existence is quite plain. Witherspoon summarizes this progression by stating that thought was “realized through speech, song, and prayer.”<sup>24</sup> This attributes an extreme amount of power to thought in the Navajo worldview. After all, according to the Navajo, *dine bizaad* was not a byproduct, but rather the origin, of their culture. As a result, discussing *dine bizaad* is no simple matter, and should not be regarded as such. This *dine* view of the importance their language also supports the main thesis of this paper: since *dine bizaad* is regarded as having brought the Navajo world into existence, it seems apparent that the central concepts of Navajo existence would be evident therein.

Now that this has been fully established, the conditions of *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho* in regard to the Navajo language—and more specifically, the Navajo lexicon—can be explored. Embedded in the nouns and the verbs of this lexicon, a balance of static and dynamic elements can be perceived, creating within the language the *hozho* state of completeness that results from balance and harmony.

One of the main grammatical devices for the expression of ideas in the Navajo language is the noun. The sole purpose of the noun in the Navajo sentence is “to name or mention the thing spoken of.”<sup>25</sup> All other concerns—case, gender, number, and so on—are taken care

of by other words in the sentence, particularly the verb (which will be discussed shortly). The noun, therefore, is often simple and monosyllabic. This goes according to the following observation by Edward Sapir:

*The Na Dene languages [such as that of the Navajo], probably the most specialized of all, are tone languages and, while presenting a superficially "polysynthetic" aspect, are built up, fundamentally, of monosyllabic elements of prevailingly nominal significance which have fixed order with reference to each other and combine into morphologically loose "words" ...*<sup>26</sup>

These "monosyllabic elements" that "combine into morphologically loose 'words'" are the nouns. Indeed, as Haile notes, these monosyllabic nouns are frequently referred to as "root words."<sup>27</sup> To examine these nouns, therefore, is to examine these root words and the concepts they name. Such is my approach in this work: by looking at the concepts conveyed by several key nouns, the balance between static and dynamic elements of *dine bizaad* will be brought to light.

The nouns that I will explore are those that refer to time, including the words for months and years. The following are the names of the months as transcribed by Berard Haile<sup>28</sup> and translated by Frances Watkins:<sup>29</sup>

The six winter months are:

October, *ga'ji*, "back to back"

November, *nlt's'i ts'osi*, "light or slender wind"

December, *nlt's'i tso*, "much or big wind"

January, *yasnlt'es*, "melting snow"

February, *atsa biya'z*, "eaglets"

March, *gwosc'id*, "a word of obscure meaning"

The six summer months are:

April, *t'a'c'il*, "short corn"

May, *t'a'tso*, "tall corn"

June, *yais jasc'ili*, "'I insert the small grains,' considered by  
some the month for planting"

July, *naeesjastso*, "the big sugar cane"

August, *bini'nt'a'ts'osi*, "light ripening"

September, *bini'nt'a'tso*, "the great ripening, or harvest"<sup>30</sup>

As can be seen here, each noun designates a month by naming it. In some cases, the name alludes to the significance of the month, as is the case with June and October. With June, it can be seen that its name suggests a culturally significant event—the time for planting. Also significant is the name for October, which translates from the Navajo as "back to back." This is best illustrated by Watkins: she states that "this is the time that the white of winter and the yellow of summer meet, turn their backs on each other, the one to go forward into the new year, the other to go back over its old trail."<sup>31</sup> However, there are other names whose names are more obscure, such as the noun indicating the month of March. Despite this difference, however, it is obvious that one thing holds true: each month has a set name.

Interestingly, even though the names of the months are set words, the "length of the season is conjectural."<sup>32</sup> In this way, the lengths of the months themselves are also somewhat conjectural. This is further emphasized by the fact that months and days are not numbered, making it "difficult... to render dates with anything like precision."<sup>33</sup> In this way, it can be seen that the Navajo sense of time is both static and dynamic: the months are always named with the same noun, yet the time each month and season actually is varies. By balancing these elements, completeness and harmony are achieved.

When discussing nouns that name different time elements, perhaps most noticeable is that although there is a word for "year," it is hard to connect this word with the passage of time. Indeed, Haile



notes that “a chronological record of years is not kept.”<sup>34</sup> This can be seen in the following example. Traditionally it was unusual for a person to compute their age; today, a common response to the question “*duki ninaxai*” (how many are your years) would be “*txadin sinaxai sasin*,” (I think I am 30 years old).<sup>35</sup> The lack of surety in this answer conveys that telling time in this fashion is not common in Navajo thought. In this way, the Navajo balance of static and dynamic elements is once again shown in the nouns of *dine bizaad*. In this instance, the dynamic element of time is its passage: regardless of any words to describe it, it still continues. This dynamic aspect of time, however, is balanced by a static element: time, although it is recognized as passing, is not easily calculated. The effect of this is quite interesting, as it seems that the past and present are indistinguishable, although time has elapsed. In this way, there is a sense of continuation in the Navajo worldview—although the present is not the past, it is not separate from the past. It is this continuation that creates the state of *hozho*, a state of completeness. With both the past and the present connected, time is complete. From this analysis, it is apparent that the assertion that the conditions of *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho*—balance and harmony—can be reflected through the nouns of the Navajo lexicon is not a false one.

Not only is this true for the nouns of the Navajo lexicon, it is also true for the other main grammatical device of the Navajo language: the verb. The verbs of *dine bizaad* have a more complicated purpose than the nouns; while the noun simply states the name of the subject, the verb conveys “the number of persons acting, as well as the particular manner in which they posit the act.”<sup>36</sup> Yet this is not all that the verb conveys. In his *The Central Concepts of Navajo Worldview* (1975), Gary Witherspoon explores the six modes and four aspects between which the verb distinguishes. These modes include the iterative, which “denotes repetition of an act, event, or condition,”<sup>37</sup> and the usitative, which “denotes the habitual performance of the act.”<sup>38</sup> The aspects include the repetitive and the continuative, the former of which “denotes constant repetition,” while the latter denotes continuous action.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the extreme complexity of *dine bizaad* verbs, however, certain elements are always present. While the more complex purposes of the verb are important to mention, I will examine the fundamental components. In its simplest form the Navajo verb contains at least three parts. Berard Haile uses the following example to illustrate this concept. He has added the hyphenation for this purpose:

a - s - t'a, I do it

*t'a* is the stem of the verb, its essential part, which defines the act in kind, and distinguishes it from any other.

*s* is the subject, here represented by the pronominal sign of the first person singular, I.

*a* is a modal prefix which, in this instance, shows absence of any specific mode of positing the act, therefore, the mere act of doing.<sup>40</sup>

To examine the verbs fully, therefore, it is important to look at these components. Through them, I will trace the balance of static and dynamic elements evident within *dine bizaad*.

The first element that I will look at is the stem of the verb, in this case, the "t'i." This is what Haile calls "its essential part, which defines the act in kind, and distinguishes it from any other."<sup>41</sup> This portion of the verb is the core; it is unique to that particular verb, and describes a particular action. This portion of the verb is also where a very clear distinction is made between static and dynamic elements of the Navajo language. Indeed, as Edward Sapir notes, Navajo (and other languages in the Na Dene family) "make[s] a fundamental distinction between active and static verb forms."<sup>42</sup> Active verb forms are the dynamic verb forms; as their description suggests, these verbs express action (such as walking, running, and so on). The static verb forms, on

the other hand, express states of existence. An example of a static verb is the verb “to be.” There is a clear distinction between these verb forms, and yet they both are present within the lexicon. In this way, the balance and harmony evident within *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho* are also evident within this portion of the verb.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the verb is what Haile called the “modal prefix.” In this instance, the “a” represents the “absence of any specific mode of positing the act, [and] therefore, the mere act of doing.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, this portion of the verb illustrates just what is being done, and what it is being done to (in this case, nothing). This also shows the balance and harmony between the static and dynamic—either something is being acted upon (dynamic), or the action is simply happening (static). This balance is always present; as a result, the verb is not complete without this modal prefix. Therefore, it can be seen that within the Navajo lexicon there is a balance between these static and dynamic elements.

In conclusion, it can be seen that *dine bizaad* reflects the blessing *Sa’a Naghai Bik’e Hozho*: within both there is the *hozho* state of completeness brought about by the balance of static and dynamic elements. Such an analysis not only helps illuminate the Navajo culture, but also the interconnected nature of human existence. Culture is reflected in every aspect of human life. In this case, by examining this Navajo ceremonial blessing and the Navajo language, central concepts of Navajo culture can be seen and more clearly understood.



ENDNOTES

1. Please note that the Navajo words used in this paper are written using the English alphabet, not the alphabet of the Navajo. As a result, the correct accent marks are not present, and the correct pronunciation is not as readily deduced.

2. John Farella, *The Main Stalk: A Synthesis of Navajo Philosophy* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1984), 165.

This translation is of the following Navajo verse:

*Sa'a naaghai bik'e hozhoon nasisdiigo, adishni*

*Sa'a naaghai bik'e hozhoon,*

*Dootidilneehii*

*Dii nasisdlai* (repeat four times)

*Hozho nahasdlai* (repeat four times)

The translation itself is by Reichard, with modifications by John Farella.

3. The spellings of this blessing are as numerous as its interpretations. The spelling that I use in this paper, *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho*, is derived from the work of Robert Young and William Morgan, Sr., *The Navajo Language: A Grammar and Colloquial Dictionary* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), and John R. Farella's work *The Main Stalk: A Synthesis of Navajo Philosophy* (1984). Using these two works is not arbitrary; both the *Dictionary* and Farella's work are the more recent works wherein this phrase is found. In addition, they are where a precedent of interscholastic consistency is first seen. For this reason, I am using this spelling to ally myself with the existing precedent.

4. The Navajo themselves are the largest Native American tribe today in the United States. John Bierhorst states that they number

well over a hundred thousands person, living mainly in northeastern Arizona and adjacent New Mexico. See John Bierhorst, *In the Trail of the Wind: American Indian Poems and Ritual Orations*. (Toronto: Collins Publishers, 1971), 199. Bierhorst also notes that the spelling “Navaho” was introduced after the southwest had been acquired by the United States during the Mexican War. Although Americans changed the spelling of their name, the Navajo themselves continued to use the Spanish °œj.°± For this reason, out of respect for the people, I use the spelling °œNavajo°± throughout this paper.

5. Gary Witherspoon, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 19.

6. Translated, *dine bizaad* literally means “the man, his words,” or “the people, their words” See Alan Wilson, *Breakthrough Navajo: An Introductory Course* (New Mexico: The University of New Mexico, 1969), 2.

7. *Dine* is the word the Navajo use for themselves. Translated, it means “the people.” Throughout this paper, the words *dine* and Navajo will be used interchangeably. As the *dine* themselves do this, it seemed acceptable for me to do so as well.

8. Berard Haile, *Starlore Among the Navajo* (New Mexico: William Gannon, 1977), 24.

9. Haile, 16.

10. Ibid., 16.

11. Witherspoon, 18.

12. Ibid., 25.

13. Ibid., 25.

14. Farella, 157.

15. Ibid., 181.

16. Ibid., 181.

17. *Nilchi* is an important Navajo concept that, according to James McNeley, pervades “virtually all aspects of Navajo ideology” See James McNeley, *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy* (Arizona:

ENDNOTES (cont.)

University of Arizona Press, 1981), 1. Similar to other central Navajo concepts, however, this particular word proves difficult to translate. For the purpose of this paper, I use the translation of this term as used by McNeley: "Holy Wind." Although McNeley was not the first to coin this translation, he does offer a valid explanation: *nilchi* refers to "the air or atmosphere in its entirety, including such air when in motion, conceived as having a holy quality and powers that are not acknowledged in Western culture" (McNeley xviii). It is important to note, however, that other translations have been suggested and have been used, including "Spirit," "Holy Spirit," and "Holy Wind Spirit" (McNeley xviii). I have discarded these latter translations as they each already have connotations to the Western reader. By using the term Holy Wind, I hope to relay the essence of the Navajo meaning, while not imposing Western connotations onto the idea itself.

18. McNeley, 1.

19. Witherspoon, 29.

20. McNeley, xviii.

21. Another translation of this phrase is "Holy People." As Witherspoon points out, however, such a translation implies that these beings are "infinitely good, perfect, and worthy of homage" (Witherspoon 205), which is not consistent with Navajo views of these beings.

22. Witherspoon, 15.

23. *Ibid.*, 16.

24. *Ibid.*, 16.

25. Haile, 24.

26. William Bright, *The Collected Works of Edward Sapir, vol. 5: American Indians 1* (New York: Mouton deGruyter, 1990), 101.

27. Haile, 23.

28. Haile, 66.

29. Frances Emma Watkins, *The Navaho* (Los Angeles: The Southwest Museum, 1943), 36.

30. The transcription of the Navajo words was taken from Berard Haile's work for one main reason: unlike Frances Watkins, he uses a transcription of the Navajo words that is consistent with the rest of the paper. However, he did not offer any translation; for that reason, I am supplementing his work with that of Watkins.

31. Watkins, 36.

32. Haile, 66.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 65.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 79.

37. Gary Witherspoon, *The Central Concepts of Navajo World View* (Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975), 12.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid. With this in mind, it is therefore no surprise that, according to Witherspoon, there are "over three hundred thousand (356,200 by... count) distinct conjugations of the verb 'to go'" (Witherspoon 1975:12). It is interesting to note that *naghai*, of *Sa'a Naghai Bik'e Hozho*, is one of these many conjugations.

40. Haile, 80.

41. Ibid.

42. Bright, 101.

43. Haile, 80.

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once,

my mother gave birth.  
Everyone expected a boy.

Instead, she gave birth  
to a river.

JOSHUA LEWIS



## exposure

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NATE JONES

The gust pushed me sideways as it rolled over the summit of Saddleback Mountain. Rain pelted my hands and face, smacking into me so hard it sounded like roasting popcorn. My feet were soggy inside a steel toe prison. I held a surveyor's rod in one trembling hand, a silent radio in my other. At last I reached the top. I stood slightly crooked in the wind, reaching down towards the moldy boulder with the end of the rod, extending it towards a rusty survey point. Rain puckered on the level as I braced myself against the wind, watching the bubble swing from right to left.

"Keep it steadier than that." The radio croaked, words washed away by the wind. I widened my stance, watching the bubble move madly around the circular level.

This was my last day at work. I was within the last hour of my last real job, at the finale of my manual labor career. I didn't know it then, but these were the jobs, the people and the experiences that would help shape me. From that day on I was destined for desks, much like the one I sit at now, bound for the books, ready for the reading. My exposure to the manual labor work force has enabled me to appreciate my academic surroundings, prepared me for the future, and helped me to realize just how good a desk job can be.

I started out shoveling shit, just as good a way to start as any. Farming is the best first job a kid can have because it puts everything into

perspective. Mrs. Tuttle's English literature course is pale in comparison to the early hours, the late nights and the acidic stench following you into your sleep.

"Ya gotta shake it naw, Matt, saves on da sawdust." I can still feel the putrid stench of that great barn in my nostrils as I watched my first real boss, Stanley Parker, scoop up the humongous feces with a pitchfork and shake it violently, sending brown sawdust flying. My name wasn't Matt, and I felt like vomiting.

I worked part time and off the books for Stanley, after school on weekdays and all day every Saturday. Within a month I could shovel seven wheelbarrows full of crap in less than an hour with my eyes closed. That is, of course, after putting the hay and grain in the horse and donkey stalls, haying and graining the cows, watering the outside and inside buckets, draining the hose, throwing corn to the chickens, graining the goats and draining the hose again, all the while avoiding being bitten in the ass by Stanley's crazy goose, "Goosah!" These were my end-of-the-day chores and on warm, sunny days Stanley would help out. More often than not, he would thrust his gut forward with a cigarette burning in one scarred hand, watch me shiver in the cold Maine winter while he twirled his full beard.

"You go on ahead and feed n' watah everybody an' come on inside when you're done," he would mumble in his nasal northern accent. He was tired from our day of cutting, splitting, stacking and delivering firewood, driving horses and tractors and dump trucks and pickups and plows, moving hay from one place to the other. And besides, I still had my youth.

"One thing, Matt," Stanley would say through his long whiskers as he sat on a hay bale with his legs crossed smoking a cigarette, watching me sweat in the cold as I placed bale after bale onto a rattling conveyor belt leading to the hay loft, "Nevah get old." My name still wasn't Matt, but I didn't mind so much anymore.

Stanley eventually got a job with a local trucking company, and

passed me on to a seventy-something friend of his, Ernest Foss. Three summers in a row I left home before dark six days a week, not to return until the sun had set, picking the hay out of my ears, my eyes, mouth and nose. For the first time I had a coworker, Matt Savage. He was a grade behind me in school, and always behind me in the hay field. My old 1984 Buick was Matt's favorite spot; Ernie caught him sleeping three times. Once Stanley's wife Debbie told me, "Ernie says that he would take one Nate over ten Matts." I blushed in their small kitchen, scraped at the dirt on the floor with my boots, hoping that and wondering if Stanley felt the same way.

Even at seventy-one years old, Ernie Foss could throw more hay than Matt and I could manage combined. He had gone into the construction business for his father after the war, where he had shot down three Germans, and I think he even crash landed in enemy territory. He had three heart attacks before seventy; I watched him recover from a bypass in a short month. I never found out if Ernie had gone to any sort of school, and only once did he mention college plans, "So, what the hell are we going to do when you go off to school? You're going to get a degree in shit shovelin, so you can come back and get paid more, right?" he asked. It was the only time, despite all the cut hands and stubbed fingers, despite the frustrating farm equipment, despite the crop that just went to hell, that I would ever hear Ernie curse. It was the last time he would mention college, the only time he would suggest that I could not hay for him forever.

Despite the hours and the work, haying was a great job. I got to drive a 1940s dump truck through downtown Somersworth a few times a week, I got a great tan while driving tractors in an endless loop around the field, stayed in shape, learned about tractor engines and trucks, and once I saw a Farmall tractor burst into flames.

"Get the hay!" Ernie had shouted while madly pulling the clumps of dry straw away from the sputtering, sizzling engine. The fire sirens howled in the distance, Matt, Ernie and I stood and watched as the

fuselage exploded, the rubber seat dripped onto the ground like napalm. Matt and I looked at each other hopefully; maybe we would have the day off.

“Now you know what you need to do, don’t you?” Ernie looked Matt right in the eye, “Go down to Hatfield’s and get the other Farmall so you can finish.” We should have known better.

I had been doing odd jobs on rainy days for a friend of my father, Rick Lovely. Forty-something with a ponytail and sunglasses, Rick was the guy who wanted everything done right and right away without having to do anything himself. Rick had recently been appointed the transfer station director, after nearly the entire dump crew quit. He had heard about my hard work from Stanley and Ernie, he had seen it in his garden. When Jigsy (I still don’t know his real name), one of the three remaining employees after the strike, had a heart attack, Rick gave me a call.

There is more money in trash than hay. Working at the dump was a pivotal point in my career: my motivation was money. While my paychecks may have been bigger than those from Ernie or Stanley, never again would I experience the thrill of working, of changing something that I could see with my eyes, touch with my callused hands and smell with a sick stomach. I still miss the feeling of a tractor beneath me, the eyes of Stanley’s livestock watching me as I prepared their dinner. Never again would the satisfaction of mowing a fifty-acre field, fixing a mower, or delivering a baby calf flow in my blood. This job had no purpose, only the paycheck.

I started weekends my junior year in high school, and was almost full time by the beginning of my senior year. My first week, Rick pulled me away from the clatter of bottles and cans and told me to come in Monday morning before we opened. He had handed me the metal end of a shovel, a beaten trash barrel and a flickering flashlight.

“C’mon,” he said “I gotta do something.” This meant I had to do something. He led me over to the giant blue metal bin, “the hoppah,”

which stuck out of the compactor like a growth. He pointed to a dark tunnel running along the side of the bin, toward the compactor. Spider webs dangled.

“Go about four feet, there’s a door on your left, open it, it should be full of stuff, just clean it out.” He dropped a key in the trash barrel “There’s the compactor key, so you know nobody can turn it on while you’re in there.” The cramped compartment was directly beneath the gap between the compactor and the blue bin, so that any loose odds and ends of trash fell in the gap and collected in the small space. It hadn’t been cleaned in years and it took me three horrible hours to finish. To Rick’s credit, my paycheck said five.

The turnover rate in trash is high. I started working with Mary, a sturdy fifty-something who taught me how to recycle bottles and cans. Richard Bradburn was the only employee left after the strike; he and I had opposite hours. Rick was expanding the possibilities of refuse, adding recycling programs. We began accepting plastic and paper along with the aluminum and glass. Mary quit and I took more and more time off. Rick pulled me back in and hired three retirees. Harland worked a lot and spoke a little, Roger was a hard worker and a good guy, and Jerry, a short guy with a long face, was a riot. Jerry hired me to shovel the snow off his roof after big storms. It took four to five hours to slide all the snow off his massive barn, five hours spent slipping and sliding on the shiny aluminum roof while listening to Jerry’s jokes and eating his candy. I always felt guilty when he paid me more than I had asked. He was fond of kids; he always carried candy in his pockets. Everyone at the dump was a war veteran.

I trembled with anger after answering the same questions every day, ones that all had the same answer:

“Put it in the purple bin.” They would, only to return a few days later with yet another bag of glass or aluminum, and ask once again,

“Where do ya want it?” Repeat process three thousand times. There were others who tried to be original. A favorite was:

“Smells like a brewery in here!” as they came through the door.

Once I had turned and looked a large man in the eye and answered, "No shit." He complained to Rick and I wished I had been fired.

Once on a normally crazy Saturday, with the bags of leaky beer cans overflowing the small recycling building, clogging the door, all of the bins crashing, my gloves soaked through with beer and laundry detergent and soda, a small old woman weaved her way through the chaos and touched me lightly on the shoulder. I turned suddenly, a beer bottle dripping in one hand, a soaked roll of yellow paper towels in the other, "Do you take boats?"

Every day I would stand in the shower for hours on end, scrubbing the beer out from underneath my fingernails, the dirt from my face, and the sweat from my eyes which I hadn't wanted touch with my grimy hands during the day. Afterwards I would sit on the couch and practice my resignation speech.

My final summer before college was approaching fast, (I had opened the acceptance letter in the recycling building,) and I was dreading a summer at the transfer station under the watchful eyes of Rick, when my manual labor career took its last turn.

I had helped my next door neighbor, Dana Scott, who was in the construction business, on several occasions, hanging sheet rock and such. Another one of my neighbors, Chris Mende, was the head of a local surveying company, Civil Consultants. He and Dana were good friends, and one day on a bike ride my name passed between them. Chris was looking for people, and I got a call.

Rick resigned from the dump two weeks before I did. He was off to some higher paying government waste management job. He left without a party, but when I left the guys bought an extra box of doughnuts and Jerry slipped me twenty bucks.

For most college-bound kids, the first month of college is the homesickness month. I was lucky and experienced homesickness my first few weeks of surveying. Working for Civil Consultants not only beefed up my bank account, but also helped me adjust to living away from home before I really had to.



I reported on the first day with a backpack and no clue where I was headed for the next week. Chris had told me to be ready to rough it. I was expecting the worst. A week before I started I bought a small BB gun in case I had to live off squirrel meat. I was paired with Bill Hertzog and his dog, Campbell. The first ride north to our work site, a nature reserve in northern Maine, was much like the ones to follow: silent. Bill was a Vietnam Veteran; he flew a huge American flag from the porch of whatever motel or inn the company stuck us in. He carried a great gun with him and often he would disappear to the shooting range at night. That first week he came inside the single room with two beds and said, "I saw your gun. It fell out of your bag, and I just put it back." I blushed, comparing his semiautomatic, high-powered rifle to my \$9.99 BB pistol.

"Oh."

"Looked nice."

"Yeah, it's all right." It must have looked real enough.

I had to rise at four-thirty in the morning to keep up with Bill. After taking the truck, then the four-wheeler as far as we could, we would hike for another hour to get to where we had left off the day before. If we were lucky we were up and surveying at seven in the morning. On the first day Bill taught me how to blaze and paint a surveyed line. My second day I spent alone in the woods blazing and painting, following the neon orange flags dangling from the trees with a thirty-pound bucket of paint strapped to my back and a hatchet in my hand.

Most of my time at Civil was spent surveying the Appalachian Trail, a horrid little path that runs from Maine to Georgia, swerving along the way so that it may run over any hellish mountains that happen to be near. Eventually Bill, Campbell and I found ourselves working out of a condo at the base of Saddleback Ski Mountain. The Appalachian ran over the summit of the mountain, Bill and I were there to help widen the corridor of land owned by the National Park Service for the trail.

To survey, one uses special instruments that measure distance, angle, height and, eventually, the acreage of land. For these instruments to work, a clear path must be established between a special “gun” and a “target.” Thus, I found myself wielding chainsaws and machetes, mowing a clear path for the infra-red laser to shoot through the woods, and then I would commence climbing cliffs and scaling walls while hauling a tiny prism on a pole, an “idiot stick” to be shot by Bill and his hi-tech instrument. Bill and I usually took turns between “cutting the line” and hauling the equipment, and on rainy days it was usually my turn to cut. On one such miserable day, I had turned back to cutting and fell a small pine, which, to my ultimate surprise, fell forward and vanished. I stood on the edge of a tall cliff, looking out over the western mountains of Maine as a thunderstorm raged overhead. The small pine tree tumbled down the rock face below me. I was hypnotized by the beauty of the scene, until Bill came up beside me cursing loudly. He pointed downwards, at the tree line three hundred feet below us, “Now we need to get there.” For the next day and a half I stomped around at the base of the cliff while Bill stood atop the wall of rock, trying to catch a glimpse of the rod between the treetops.

Days were better when Bill cut the line, I would stay steadily behind him, tossing the brush and branches to the side, using a hatchet or machete to get any leaves Bill left behind. Once I was bent behind Bill, tossing a small birch into a stream to our left, when a great dead limb fell from overhead and cracked my naked skull. I swore loudly, dropped the hatchet and stood up. Bill raged onward, deafened by the chainsaw’s wail. I reached into my sweat matted hair and my hand came back red and dripping. It was a half hour hike and a two-hour four-wheeler ride back to the truck, and another forty minutes to a hospital before I could take my hand off my head. I’d been holding back the blood. I didn’t need stitches, but workman’s comp was sweet for a day I spent lounging around the condo, devouring the microwavable vegetarian dinners that the company provided us with

and watching CNN, Bill's favorite channel, and the only one our T.V. would tune into.

So there I was, my last day surveying, struggling to hold the "idiot stick" level in the fierce wind atop Saddleback. I wasn't sure if I was ready to move on, if I was really prepared for a college curriculum. What I did know is that no cafeteria meal would ever be as bad as microwavable vegetarian, that no professor would ever ask me to clean a compactor, that no campus lawn would need to be mowed, baled, and delivered. After climbing the mountains, recycling the bottles, throwing the hay and shoveling the shit, I was ready for anything that the world could throw at me. While I held on to a runaway hay wagon, crouched beneath a stinking compactor, or sat hopelessly lost in the middle of the great Maine woods, college became an oasis of chairs and desks, a haven of information, a nirvana of new experiences. And now, as I sit here at this desk typing away madly, it is my past experiences that make me struggle with the grades and scholarships, for I now know what is down the manual labor road, a path I wish not to travel along anymore. And while I do not wish to return to another hayfield or recycling center, these jobs will never leave me, for even now I notice the survey points embedded in the campus sidewalk, still check the tops of cans and peer into recycling bins, still look out the window when I hear a tractor on the road. And the most important of all, I know that I still have my youth.





## this is how I would draw you:

Crack first, with the cheeks  
and cellulite soft in charcoal.  
Then the spine, the base  
strong in water-colored sky  
pulling to a pale thin  
robin at the neck.  
Your ears and head in pencil,  
coated with light eraser shavings.  
Your thighs bright,  
Sticky in navy oil, smudged  
by the pad of my thumb.  
The arms, wide then tapered  
at wrists and fingers in  
felt-tipped coral.  
Last the feet, manicured,  
glazed with round squares  
of pink pastel.

HEATHER ANN BLAIN



# sarah grimke

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*forerunner of modern feminism*

CHARLES A. HOHMAN

Sarah and Angelina Grimke, two South Carolina sisters who proved to be guiding lights in the Southern abolitionist movement, are rarely mentioned in the same breath as late nineteenth-century feminist leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Jane Addams. Yet, while the two are historically regarded as anti-slavery crusaders, they were also staunch advocates of women's rights. In fact, many signs show that the Grimke sisters were also early molders of the feminist movement that would dominate intellectual thought in the twentieth-century. However, while younger sister Angelina gained the most notoriety in her lifetime and in historical circles, it was Sarah Grimke who was truly the more vital precursor to the modern feminist movement.

Gerda Lerner, the leading historical authority on the Grimke clan, argues "it [is] evident that it was Sarah who developed an original and radical argument for women's rights, whereas Angelina's emphasis was more on antislavery and on women's right to participate publicly in the campaign for abolition."<sup>1</sup> An examination of Sarah's life, ideas and writings does indeed show her to be more influential in planting the seeds of what would become one of the most powerful intellectual movements in the years following her 1873 death.

The ideas that both ladies preached could not be less indicative of their background and upbringing. Sarah Grimke was born on No-

vember 26, 1792, to a prominent Charleston, South Carolina family. The Grimke patriarch, John Grimke, was a celebrated judge and politician, and also a slaveholder. Mary Smith Grimke, herself a woman of considerable wealth, wed the judge in 1784, and the couple soon began procreating afterwards, resulting in ten children by the turn of the century, six boys and four girls (including Sarah). And in 1805, one more was added to the family. On February 20 of that year, Angelina Emily Grimke was born.

Twelve year-old Sarah took a shining to the baby Grimke. "At last, it seemed that Sarah Grimke had found a purpose in her life. She would care for this child as though it were her own. But to do so, she would first have to find her own road to self-fulfillment. To show the way to Angelina she herself would have to travel a strange and difficult road."<sup>2</sup> Among the many curves in that road were the issues she had with the treatment with the slaves who worked on the Grimke plantation. The young Sarah had also developed a severe distaste for her family's slave-owning ways. "Sarah was four years old when, accidentally, she witnessed the whipping of a slave woman. She rushed out of the house, sobbing. A half hour later her nurse found her on one of the wharves, trying to convince a captain to take her away to someplace where such things did not happen."<sup>3</sup> Throughout Sarah's childhood, such incidents seemed to be rules rather than exceptions.

Despite a tight-knit, almost maternal bond between her and her goddaughter/youngest sister, Sarah's young life was plagued with problems. Of course, the most damaging experience she faced was her constant qualms and disagreements with the slavery perpetrated at her home on a daily basis. In her adult writings, Sarah would draw from these painful memories in order to illustrate how savage and brutal the practice was. She recalled one particularly disturbing form of punishment: "A punishment dreaded more by the slaves than whipping...is standing on one foot and holding the other in hand...a strap was contrived to fasten around the ankle and pass around the neck; so that the least weight of the foot would choke the person. The



pain occasioned by this unnatural position was great; and when continued, as it sometimes was, for sometimes more than an hour, produced intense agony.”<sup>4</sup>

Things only grew worse for Sarah Grimke as she grew older. In 1818, when she was twenty-five, she had a formative experience that would change her thought structures, values, and subsequently, her life. As she had grown into adulthood, she had strayed from her parents and their strict religious indoctrination. So when her father, Judge John Grimke, became ill, she was convinced that her abandonment of the Christian values upon which she had been raised was the root of his illness. Thus, she reasoned that reconciliation with these values would lead to a divine intervention that would cure the ailing man. “Total devotion to the sick man, prayer and Christian living would be tokens of the sincerity of her repentance.”<sup>5</sup> But it was to no avail: the Grimke father died in July 1819. The manner in which Judge Grimke died alone with Sarah, removed from friends, family and home, led her to become jaded, lonely and isolated. Even Angelina, the sister who at one point affectionately referred to Sarah as “Mother,” had lost touch. Sarah Grimke was in a most dire state.

She found solace in the teachings of John Woolman, a famed Quaker of the mid-eighteenth century. Sarah became attracted to the Quaker faith, not only as penance for her past indiscretions, but also as a means of preventing any recurrence of such backsliding. In fact, she was so enamored of the teachings that she soon became ordained a Quaker minister.

Soon after, she received a marriage proposal from Israel Morris, the handsome Quaker with whom Sarah had been residing in Philadelphia since shortly after her father’s passing. Morris, a father of eight whose wife Mary had passed on within a year of the Judge, had introduced Sarah to the doctrines of Woolman and the Quaker religion. He was an older fellow, mid-forties as opposed to Sarah’s late-twenties, and he became a guiding force to her in the wake of her father’s passing. But Sarah, although stricken with devotion and love for him,

firmly neglected his offer, as she did subsequent proposals. She wrote in her diary: “[The day Israel proposed] was a day of solemn heartfelt supplication that nothing might intervene between me and my God...to the individual there was sufficient attachment, but my soul shrunk from the fearful responsibility of such a situation...I have found it very hard work to give him up, had I never known of his love, I did not covet it, it was bestowed to my astonishment for I am unworthy of it. I have even thought if death had taken him from me I could have more easily yielded him.”<sup>6</sup>

Sarah Grimke struggled with her ambivalence towards Israel’s advances for a good eight years. She loved him dearly but she made a great many excuses for her rejection of his proposals. She often claimed to be bound to the ministry although many other female Quaker ministers of the time balanced familial and religious duties. Sarah also cited an aversion towards her among the Morris children, who were opposed to seeing their father take a new wife. Perhaps it was also Sarah’s almost clairvoyant ability to detect Israel’s own ambivalence about the relationship that pushed her away. Gerda Lerner, the leading historical authority on the Grimke family, cites the real reasons for Sarah’s reluctance to take Israel’s hand in matrimony: “[She] was held back...by a combination of feminism and her obsession with self-renunciation.”<sup>7</sup>

As Sarah entered her early thirties, she became more and more fervently committed to the feminist cause, in no small part brought on by her absorption of Quaker teachings. In 1827, Sarah made a voyage back to her home turf of Charleston. There, she found her beloved sister Angelina deeply disturbed by religious dilemmas. Angelina had converted from Episcopalian to Presbyterian two years earlier due to a stormy relationship with closeted abolitionist Rev. William McDowell in the local church. But when Sarah preached her love of Quakerism to her, Angelina listened attentively. Soon, Angelina severed her ties with the Presbyterians and shortly thereafter, joined the Charleston Quaker meeting. But that meeting was miniscule, in-

active and virtually defunct. Angelina found herself in constant strife with the remaining Grimkes in Charleston, not to mention other residents in her hometown due to her outspoken and unpopular opinions on the slavery issue.

Finding herself immersed in disheartening isolation similar to what Sarah had experienced upon the Judge's death, Angelina elected to move to Philadelphia and live with her sister. However, the move did not improve life for either of the two ladies. Sarah, and eventually Angelina, both experienced almost universal hostility for their activism within the Quaker church due to their gender. But the drought of success and substantial work the two were experiencing was short-lived, as things would soon pick up for them both.

In 1835, Angelina Grimke wrote a supportive letter to the nation's most celebrated abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, which was printed in his paper *The Liberator*. And Sarah, crestfallen over the immense disappointment that her ministry was bringing her, finally freed herself from the grip of strict Quaker doctrine, and subsequently, her ministry. Thanks to the response to her *Liberator* letter, Angelina was christened an abolitionist leader, aware of the boost a white Southern female aristocrat would lend the movement. She soon wrote *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*, a pamphlet attempting to lure Southern women to support the abolitionist position. The pamphlet was a huge success, inspiring glowing praise across the nation, and the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) recruited her as an active member.

Sarah persistently begged her baby sister not to join the AASS, fearing violent repercussions against her and the surviving Grimkes back in Charleston. But Angelina did not heed her sister's advice, and actually ended up persuading Sarah, who was reluctant to be cast in the public spotlight, to join the Society as well. Partially in defiance of the stodgy, orthodox Philadelphia Quakers, the Grimke sisters moved to New York and became the first two female AASS agents. It was this event that rejuvenated Sarah's love of Angelina. "[Sarah] had helped her sister to a more positive and carefree childhood than she herself

had had. She had converted Angelina to Quakerism, setting her on the path to antislavery. Now it was Angelina who helped her find a practical outlet for her long-held antislavery convictions. In a sense, it was Angelina who turned her away from mysticism and a purely religious quest to the work of the radical agent of social change.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1837, Sarah achieved the first of many intellectual triumphs. She published a pamphlet entitled *An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States*, influenced by the Biblical arguments against slavery by AASS agent Theodore Weld. Her main thesis stated that “slavery is a crime because it converts man into a thing.”<sup>9</sup> She went on to cite numerous Biblical passages that lend support to that theory and as an added bonus, struck down and countered the Biblical affirmations that slaveholders often employed. The work was revolutionary because it was one of the first, and by far the most thorough and convincing, abolitionist argument to cite specific Biblical evidence and use it to deride the controversial institution.

Soon, both sisters were speaking out, lecturing against slavery at any chance they could get. And with their increased presence came an increased hostility towards their gender. The idea of women speaking out on political causes, in front of men as well as women, was foreign to the male-dominated hierarchy of power, even in the reputedly progressive northernmost section of the country. Despite the controversy, offers for the sisters to give orations poured in, as did publication offers. Both sisters quickly gained a reputation as leaders of antislavery women across the United States. The two went on a hugely-successful 1837 New England lecture tour, which resulted in the assembly of a plethora of female antislavery organizations which conducted mass petitioning to end the practice.

But the opposition took its toll. The two were desecrated by the press and loathed by the clergy, who often delivered whole sermons on the alleged immorality of their assertiveness. Ultimately, they chose to respond to these attacks despite the pleading of even their most supportive male allies, such as their mentor Weld. The skepticism of

Weld, and Angelina's subsequent marriage to him soon after their dispute was amiably settled, "confirmed Sarah Grimke's feminism and strengthened her understanding of women's need to assert the autonomy of their minds."<sup>10</sup>

To that effect, Angelina penned *Letters to Catherine Beecher* (Beecher was a friend who advocated the raising of educational standards, although Beecher would soon respond to the Grimkes with a fierce defense of domesticity). Sarah subsequently wrote the far more comprehensive and elaborate *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women*. The latter grew to be considered "the first comprehensive feminist argument presented by an American woman."<sup>11</sup> Sarah was not oblivious to this potential, beginning the work by "I feel that I am venturing on nearly untrodden ground."<sup>12</sup>

Although her intellectual capacity was stunted by her lack of formal education, Sarah nonetheless managed to compose a thorough, powerful and (for the time) radical, defense of women's rights and a scathing indictment of domesticity and the male-dominated, misogynistic power structure. She drew most heavily from the text in which she was most trained: the Bible. Much as she did to justify abolition, Sarah drew specific Biblical quotes and passages to justify the rights of women and rebuke the Biblical defenses that her detractors would inevitably cite. Yet she also was acquainted with Enlightenment thought due to her father's prominence in early America, and also drew inspiration from her abolitionist contemporaries such as Garrison and Weld.

Perhaps the most controversial of many statements was Sarah's reinvention of the Adam and Eve concept. "[God created Eve] to give [Adam] a companion, *in all respects* his equal, one who was like himself *a free agent*, gifted with intellect and endowed with immortality; not a partaker merely of his animal gratifications, but able to enter into all his feelings as a moral and responsible being."<sup>13</sup> And she goes on not only to attack the creationist theory, but also the fall of Adam so often cited as the justification for female inferiority. "There was as much weakness exhibited by Adam as by Eve. They both fell from inno-

cence, and consequently from happiness, *but not from equality* [emphasis in the original].”<sup>14</sup>

It is rarely debated that the 1838 treatise *Letters on the Equality* was Sarah Grimke’s greatest achievement in the advancement of feminist thought, the spark that brought feminist idealism to the forefront of the American intellectual milieu. What is arguable, though, is just how much of a trailblazer Sarah Grimke was at this time. When she speaks of “nearly untrodden ground,” one may question just how nearly untrodden that ground was. Many Europeans and even a few American women preceded her, although it was unlikely that Grimke was aware of their existence. And even if she were, those writers were suppressed and ignored enough to be rather esoteric in the scope of 1840’s history. Additionally, any works that preceded *Letters* obviously did not have a similar impact. The other authors were not household names as was Grimke nor were they influential enough to produce the generation of proto-feminists that would succeed Grimke.

Lerner argues that “the core of Sarah’s feminist argument [is] the charge that men have used women, instrumentalized them and benefited from their subordination.”<sup>15</sup> It is precisely this main argument that separates Grimke from her less-celebrated predecessors. She not only asserted women’s inalienable rights and unqualified equality, but she also showed that, as Lerner states, “wherever power is exercised over a group of people someone benefits and someone is exploited.”<sup>16</sup> Grimke compared the oppression of women to that of slaves, an argument no doubt enhanced by her prominence in the seething abolitionist movement.

*Letters on the Equality* caused quite a stir among intellectual circles upon its publication. However, had its publication not taken place in an era concerned with the far more pervasive and divisive issue of slavery, it is quite likely that Grimke’s masterwork would have had a meteoric impact, and perhaps be recognized for the historic piece of literature it is. As it stands, *Letters* is a relatively ignored historical document in modern times, neglected by history educators as one of the

earliest truly revolutionary assertions of feminism. Nonetheless, its impact at the time of publication was enough to light the torch of American feminism, one that has burned continuously for over 160 years. Early feminists and Grimke's contemporaries, most notably Elizabeth Cady Stanton, willingly acknowledged the book's influence. But around the time of suffrage and temperance, Sarah Grimke became historically overshadowed by more aggressive and successful feminists such as Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Jane Addams, and she was subsequently forgotten.

Nonetheless, many twentieth-century feminist ideals owe a great debt to Grimke's *Letters*. Sarah Grimke spends a great deal of time differentiating between "sex," woman being a divine creation, and "gender," female being a manmade creation. Such meticulous scrutiny of semantics would not gain prominence again until the latter half of the twentieth-century, with feminist advocates like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. Grimke also discusses the miniscule wages for women workers, an argument that can be seen as planting an early seed for what would become the Equal Rights Amendment nearly a century later. She cites the following example: "A man who is engaged in teaching, can always, I believe, command a higher price for tuition than a woman—even when he teaches the same branches, and is not in any respect superior to the woman...it is so in every occupation in which the sexes engage indiscriminately."<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Grimke faults the educational system and the institution of marriage for perpetuating the idea of female inferiority. Those two targets would resonate with feminist activists throughout the next century.

Perhaps surprisingly, the unwed Sarah devoted much of the 1840's to performing as a surrogate mother for Weld and Angelina's children, their mother being severely ill from incurable pregnancy complications. This duty allowed Sarah little time to expand on the feminist momentum she had gained. Of course, knowledge of Sarah's forced domesticity may have caused many more radical feminists of the time to brand her a hypocrite, especially since Theodore Weld was away

from the household engaged in various abolitionist activities. With Angelina ill and Sarah swamped with traditional housewife duties, the Grimkes were unable to continue their public speaking or writing ventures.

In the 1850's, Weld and the Grimkes developed a boarding school, but it failed to reel in sufficient funds to keep the family fed. When the trio received a generous offer to join the Raritan Bay Union, one of many Utopian communities to spring up during this romantic era of American thought, it caused a great schism between the two sisters. Sarah was hesitant to lose control of her life and privacy in the commune, while a recovered Angelina was embittered by suppressed resentment over her children's dependence on Sarah instead of her. The resentment between the two was tolerated only because of the mutual attachment between Angelina's children and Sarah.

By the mid-1850's, the once loving Grimke sisters were immersed in a vicious feud, the result of many years of repressed bitterness, one that would simmer down but never completely disappear until both were dead. It was during this time that Sarah returned to writing, although none of her works of this era were completed or published. These letters and essays were only recently compiled, in their roughest forms, by Gerda Lerner in her 1998 book *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*.

These essays convey that, although she was rapidly aging and for once-airtight bond with Angelina had been severed, she was still a powerful intellectual force. She remained unflinchingly devoted to the advancement of women's rights, as is demonstrated in *The Education of Women*, although the Biblical context of *Letters* is virtually non-existent. This essay has a more radical, caustic and bitter tone than her previous work. Her anger is not only directed at men but also at women who fail to assert their basic rights. "The reason why women effect so little and are so shallow is because their aims are low. Marriage is the prize for which they strive. If failed in that, they rarely rise above the disappointment. Their life blood is curdled and hence they



become useless.”<sup>18</sup> Sarah also uses this platform to brutally attack the sexual biases of the American educational system, sex in relation to class issues and the notion that women’s rights leads to “free love.”

Although the essays were not published until over a century after her death, it is clear that Grimke was going in a direction far more advanced than the just-burgeoning feminist movement of the post-Civil War era. She advocates a more tough-minded self-reliance approach to achieving true sexual equality. “As she came to see the fallacy of women trying to achieve freedom through the same male system that enslaved them, Grimke redefined that freedom more in terms of a woman’s reliance on herself and on other women,”<sup>19</sup> argues feminist historian Elizabeth Ann Bartlett. Her words, and the forceful way in which they’re delivered, indicate a kindred spirit not so much with that era’s feminist leaders but more aggressive feminists, most notably NOW founder Gloria Steinem.

Sarah Grimke never lost her commitment to feminism. She stayed avidly interested in the cause’s developments as she grew older, admiring the strides the movement was making and optimistic about where it was headed. Even at the age of 78, she and her sister participated in a wide-spread suffrage demonstration on Election Day 1870. However, her failure to complete or publish any of the writings contained in Lerner’s compilation may indicate a reluctant decision by Sarah Grimke to pass the torch she had lit to a younger generation, one that would interpret the ideals of early feminists like her as gospel.

It is hard to tell how great an influence Sarah Grimke, or even her more acknowledged sister Angelina, had on the feminists of the twentieth-century. The controversy of *Letters on the Equality* did not translate to juggernaut sales, and the book failed to gain a second printing. Therefore, those not alive in 1838 were likely unfamiliar with the trails she blazed, and the radical positions she had taken in her early writing. Even in her lifetime, she was not recognized for her contributions. Sarah Grimke died in 1873, disappointed at her failure to get any of her post-*Letters* work published, and her contributions were recognized by only a handful of the many feminist thinkers emerging at that time. Only within the past

thirty years has the contribution of Sarah Grimke become fully realized, in no small part, due to Girda Lerner's research and her resulting 1967 biography, the first Grimke biography since Catherine Birney published a biography in 1883; Birney's disappeared almost immediately after it hit the shelves.

Yet whether they are conscious of it or not, the feminist thinkers of the twentieth-century, especially those in the post-World War II wave, owe a priceless debt to Sarah Grimke. She not only sought to prove the injustice of female oppression, but also managed to articulate astute reasons for it. She gave Biblical justification for feminism in a manner unequalled to this day. She explored many ways in which women were oppressed and related them to class, race, education and sexual repression. And Lerner theorizes that "above all, she understood that women must acquire feminist consciousness by conscious effort and that they must practice asserting their rights in order to think more appropriately."<sup>20</sup> In other words, a silent woman is an oppressed one. That idea may be her greatest of many contributions to feminist thought. It serves as proof that Sarah Grimke truly was a forerunner of modern feminism.



END NOTES

1. Gerda Lerner. *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.
2. Gerda Lerner. *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 25.
3. Ibid., 19.
4. Ibid., 35.
5. Ibid., 41.
6. Ibid., 63.
7. Ibid., 64.
8. Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*, 13.
9. Ibid., 14.
10. Ibid., 20.
11. Ibid., 21.
12. Ibid., 22.
13. Sarah Grimke, "Selection from *Letters on the Equality of Sexes and the Condition of Woman*," in *The American Intellectual Tradition Vol. I: 1630-1865*, eds. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 270.
14. Ibid., 270.
15. Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*, 24.
16. Ibid.
17. Grimke, 277.
18. Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*, 82.
19. Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority: The Origins and Interpretations of American Feminist Thought: Frances Wright, Sarah Grimke and Margaret Fuller*, ed. Gerda Lerner (Madison, WI: Carlson, 1994), 86.
20. Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*, 40.

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×

## hot oven villanelle

I grow to remember only when the honeysuckle sweeps.  
The white gleam of a neck abandoned  
to blank sweetness

bows back with ease,  
bursting in lily blooms.  
Silent honeysuckle sweeps

lightly seizing  
hot oven wounds.  
Forgotten, sweetness sleeps

until thin clouds sear  
the slit melon moon.  
Mild fire falls and honeysuckle

sweeps. Hushed mines tearing  
shells from bone blow  
dust to dust in forgotten sweetness.

The bath water sieves.  
Clouds dive in blue night.  
Savage breeze. Sweet  
from swept honeysuckle.

HONOR McELROY



## “ ’tis the music that I love thee for”

*music, moll, and androgyny in the roaring girl*

CAITLIN PATTON

**M**usic and sex: are they inextricably linked? In *The Roaring Girl*, yes, they are. The title character, Moll, is a woman who wears a man's clothes, makes music in public, and defies easy sexual definition. The characters that surround her wonder at her gender, pay her for her musical expertise, and even, in the case of Laxton, attempt to buy her sexual services. He attempts to convince Moll to “be merry and lie together,”<sup>1</sup> and although she appears at first to agree, she only does so “to teach thy base thoughts manners.”<sup>2</sup>

Moll is based on a real woman, Mary Frith, who was notorious in early modern London as a ruffian, thief, prostitute, forger, and, most importantly for my purposes, a musician. In *The Roaring Girl*, Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton use this well-known London figure to explore societal boundaries, test the lines between male and female and, in the final analysis, to do more than that: to erase the lines between the genders and blend them into one musically competent, sexually empowered character. As a result, Moll is an androgynous figure, with equally developed feminine and masculine characteristics. Her status as a professional musician is an integral part of her identity, particularly her sexual identity.

Convention dictated that a woman should never play music in public—specifically, in the presence of men. A widely held belief was that a woman's music could create uncontrollable love and/or lust in a male listener, and patriarchal society denied women that kind of sexual power.<sup>3</sup> Hence, when Moll plays her viol in mixed company, she subverts a long-standing social rule.

First, a bit of summary: The main plot of *The Roaring Girl* involves a young man named Sebastian Wengrave and his beloved, Mary Fitzallard. Difficulty arises for the couple when Sebastian's father, Sir Alexander Wengrave, turns against the match he once encouraged. Sebastian schemes to change his father's mind, and his plan is as follows: he will pretend to love the aberrant Moll so that Mary Fitzallard will, by way of contrast, seem a suddenly desirable daughter-in-law. By the end, Sebastian and his Mary are reunited, Sir Alexander is appeased, and Moll has indeed been, as Sebastian says, "a fit instrument"<sup>4</sup> between the two lovers' hearts.

Moll "'tis woman more than man, / Man more than woman."<sup>5</sup> As an extreme figure, she incites rumors and extremes of love, hate and desire. People are curious about her because she is so unusual. "There's a wench/ Called Moll, mad Moll, or merry Moll; a creature/ So strange in quality, a whole city takes/ Note of her name and person."<sup>6</sup> Here surfaces the early modern English love of spectacle: Sebastian and others enjoy Moll's cross-dressed presence as they would a play. As evidenced by the widespread fascination with monstrosity, early modern English society was intrigued by strange bodily conditions. The other characters wonder: *what is concealed under Moll's breeches*? Sir Alexander says in horror, "What, will he marry a monster with two trinkets?"<sup>7</sup> Is she really a man or a woman?

Moll refers to herself as a man on occasion: "I should draw first, and prove the quicker man,"<sup>8</sup> and also, "Methinks you should be proud of such a daughter, / As good a man as your son."<sup>9</sup> Her attire, described in the play and pictured on the title page (FIGURE 1), is masculine, and her speech is as well, but Moll does not give up her feminin-



ity. On the contrary, she is always aware of herself as a woman, even when she dresses like a man. Her taking on of masculine characteristics gives her freedom to move in the patriarchal society of early modern England. Women were expected to marry and bear children, and not to have an interest in sex for its own sake; women were not supposed to feel lust or pursue sexual satisfaction. In fact, they were supposed to be largely ignorant of sexual matters. Moll, however, turns these ideas inside out. She does not marry, and feels no need to do so. "I have no humor to marry; I love to lie o' both sides of the bed myself; and again, o' th' other side, a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey; therefore I'll never go about it."<sup>10</sup> She knows herself well enough to know that she would not be happy in the constraints of a marriage, and she does not allow herself to be forced into a societal construct for which she is not suited. Instead, she draws on both her masculine and feminine characteristics to create an androgynous identity. Her androgynous role and her association with the London underworld remove her from societal categories, and so free her from the responsibility of marrying and producing children.

Moll is not only a roaring girl but also a woman of great honor, who teaches Laxton that not every female body is for sale. "What durst move you, sir, to think me whorish?"<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, she teaches him this lesson by a very masculine means: she draws her sword and threatens to fight him. Her actions take Laxton by surprise. "Draw upon a woman! Why, what dost mean, Moll?"<sup>12</sup> She uses a skill of manhood to defend feminine chastity, for the language of masculinity was widely understood. Laxton expects Moll to be a whore, not an androgynous character so comfortable in her masculine clothes that he cannot recognize her. When she arranges a tryst with him, he does not suspect that she leads him on for the sole purpose of confronting him.

Feminine chastity was hugely important in early modern English society, as it determined a woman's value on the marriage market. Reputation was also important; to be thought unchaste was essentially the same thing as being unchaste. As a cross-dresser, Moll

looks like a loose woman, and so it comes as a surprise that, in contrast to her masculine actions and attire, she is in fact one of the most chaste characters in *The Roaring Girl*. She is one of the few characters who is not scheming to gain someone else's heart or body. It goes against her sense of honor to sell her body, and she looks down on those women who do so: "I am of that certain belief, there are more queans in this town of their own making than of any man's provoking. Where lies the slackness then? Many a poor soul would down, and there's nobody will push 'em."<sup>13</sup>

Moll sees it is entirely too easy for a man to get a whore, and therefore feels compelled to show Laxton that not every woman is his for the asking. "Thou'rt one of those/ That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore."<sup>14</sup> Moll upholds the all-important virtue of chastity, not because it is required by the society she lives in, but because of her personal honor. "In thee I defy all men,"<sup>15</sup> she says to Laxton. She recognizes the enormous difference in the power vested in the men of early modern society and the few rights given to the women. Since it is socially acceptable for men to feel lust, they become lecherous. Paradoxically, when Moll wears men's clothes, she becomes one of the most honorable characters in the play.

A large part of Moll's masculinity is her identity as a musician. Professional musicians in early modern England were supposed to be male. Moll, still capitalizing on her masculinity, claims to be able to play anything "at first sight."<sup>16</sup> Although playing and teaching music was a respectable profession for a man, women were allowed to play music only in a domestic setting. Music was not a high-class occupation, especially for those who (like Moll in her masculine role) were freelance musicians rather than under the patronage of a rich family or an important church.

What we now would refer to as "art music"<sup>17</sup> was associated almost exclusively with the upper two or three percent of the population: royalty, aristocracy, and a few wealthy and educated members of the middle class.<sup>18</sup> Renaissance and baroque musicians, who were

male, usually belonged to the middle class and aspired to a position in the court of a ruler or at least in an important church.<sup>19</sup> Only the very wealthy could afford to study music for enjoyment, so the upper classes were most important to musical development as patrons. The important creative activity took place in the middle class.

There was also a great deal of popular music, the majority of which has been lost.<sup>20</sup> Moll plays and sings this popular music. Many musicians made their living by playing for weddings, civic ceremonies, and other occasional services, but other than the speculation that it was mostly dance music, we know relatively little of what they played. *The Roaring Girl*, through the character of Moll herself, provides a look into the London underworld, and the reader finds that music must have reigned there as it did in the courts and churches. For example, the song Moll sings with Trapdoor is a veritable course in “pedlar’s French,” or underworld slang.

It was a rare feat for a woman to be as fluent as Moll in the language of the underworld. It was also rare for a woman to be fluent in music, since women were as restricted in professional music as they were in drama. Hence, Moll’s musical expertise was a major accomplishment. How did she come by her musical education? She must have taught herself. Mary Fitzallard says, “I’ve heard her much commended, sir, /For one that was ne’er taught.”<sup>21</sup> Toward the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth, female professional musicians began to appear in Italy and France, but not in England, so Moll was an anomaly.<sup>22</sup> In the newly developing forms of musical drama, such as opera and oratorio, male voices were used for the higher parts, just as boys played female roles on the early modern English stage. It was not socially correct for a woman to perform in public. Moll subverts this convention by not only performing in public, but cross-dressing while doing it. “There be a thousand close /dames that will call the viol an unmannerly instrument /for a woman.”<sup>23</sup> Obviously, Moll does not agree. She continues to play her viol in mixed company.

The viol was a particularly important instrument in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Viols have either six or seven strings, and a fretted fingerboard, like that of a guitar. They come in several different sizes: soprano, alto, tenor and bass. During the sixteenth century, viols were popular among wealthy amateurs, especially when played in consorts of three to six viols of different sizes. During the course of the Baroque period, the popularity of viol consorts diminished, but bass viols remained in widespread use both as a solo instrument and as an accompaniment instrument. Moll probably played the bass viol, and certainly one can speculate it was the most likely choice for the instrument carried by the porter who says, "Must I carry this great fiddle to your chamber, Mistress Mary?"<sup>24</sup>

The viol is also called the "viola da gamba," which literally means "viol of the leg." Observe, in FIGURE 2, the position in which it is played: seated, with legs spread to hold the instrument. This position implies sexual looseness or wantonness, which was acceptable for a man. Women, who were conditioned by society to look chaste, would not play this instrument in public. For a woman to spread her legs and perform went against long-standing and widespread conventions.

The viol is important to Moll's role as a musician; without it, that role would not exist. If Moll's cross-dressed presence is a spectacle like the performance of a play, then the viol is a vital prop in that play, one that has the power to transform a situation instantly. "Here take this viol, run upon the guts,/ And end thy quarrel singing."<sup>25</sup> The viol is a symbol of contentment. "You can cuckold me, spare not;/ Hang up my viol by me, and I care not."<sup>26</sup>

It is also a symbol of sexuality; the bow represents the male body, and the viol itself, the female. See, for instance, the face carved on the scroll of the viol in FIGURE 2. Men in early modern society were allowed and expected to be comfortable with both their own bodies and with women's bodies. Women, on the other hand, were not allowed knowledge of the bodies of either sex, and were not ex-

pected to be comfortable with any sort of physicality or sexuality. Hence, only men are allowed to play music in public, and for Moll to do so is extremely subversive. It is her androgyny that makes public performance possible, for it takes her out of societal conventions, freeing her to act as she pleases. She has very little regard for what others think of her. "Perhaps for my mad going some reprove me; / I please myself, and care not who loves me."<sup>27</sup> She is extremely sure of herself; she has confidence such as only men were supposed to have in early modern England. Her identity, unusual though it might be, is fixed, and Moll, unlike so many characters in Renaissance drama, knows exactly who she is.

There is nothing counterfeit about Moll; she is utterly open, honest, and comfortable with herself. Her self-assurance and self-knowledge—things that women were not supposed to have in early modern England—give her the confidence to be a radical non-conformist. Her identity is so secure that she will not change it to meet the expectations of others.

In addition, she is comfortable with her own sexuality to a degree that is startling to the male characters in the play. She says to Laxton, "I scorn to prostitute myself to a man/ I that can prostitute a man to me."<sup>28</sup> Her willingness to put herself into the sexually suggestive position necessary to play the viol is evidence of her acceptance of her sexuality. Other characters mistakenly perceive her as a loose, wanton woman because of her musicianship and her masculine attire. A cross-dressed woman was generally assumed to be a prostitute in early modern England, but Moll is in fact nothing of the sort.

She simply wears conventions inside out and backwards. She knows the accoutrements of masculinity, and knows how to use them to her advantage. She cross-dresses and plays the viol, but the unconventional attire and public performance of music do not destroy her identity, and she is always aware that the body under the

masculine clothing is female. Her androgynous identity remains fixed throughout the play, a mixture of masculinity and femininity, musicality and sexuality. Her music empowers her. I ask the question again: are music and sex inextricably linked? You bet they are.



# The Roaring Girle

## OR *Moll Cut-Purse.*

As it hath lately beene Acted on the Fortune-stage by  
*the Prince his Players.*

Written by *T. Middleton* and *T. Dekker.*

My case is alter'd, I must worke for my living.



Printed at *London* for *Thomas Archer*, and are to be sold at his  
shop in *Popes head-pallace*, neere the *Royall*  
*Exchange.* 1611.







*How the Viol is Tuned and Applied to the Scale of Musick.*

figure 2.



ENDNOTES

1. Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, "The Roaring Girl," in *Drama of the English Renaissance*, vol. 2, *The Stuart Period*, eds. Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (New York: Macmillan, 1976), Act 2, Sc. 1. 297.

2. Dekker and Middleton, "The Roaring Girl," Act 3, Sc. 1. 77.

3. Linda Phyllis Austern, "'Sing Againe Syren': The Female Musician and Sexual Enchantment in Elizabethan Life and Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 42 (1989): 420-448.

4. Dekker and Middleton, "The Roaring Girl," Act 2, Sc. 2. 204.

5. *Ibid.*, Act 1, Sc. 2. 133-4.

6. *Ibid.*, Act 1, Sc. 1. 99-102.

7. *Ibid.*, Act 2, Sc. 2. 81-2.

8. *Ibid.*, Act 4, Sc. 1. 77.

9. *Ibid.*, Act 5, Sc. 2. 154-5.

10. *Ibid.*, Act 2, Sc. 1. 38-42.

11. *Ibid.*, Act 3, Sc. 1. 93-4.

12. *Ibid.*, Act 3, Sc. 1. 76.

13. *Ibid.*, Act 2, Sc. 1. 340-4.

14. *Ibid.*, Act 3, Sc. 1. 77-8.

15. *Ibid.*, Act 3, Sc. 1. 97.

16. *Ibid.*, Act 4, Sc. 1. 216.

17. The term "art music" refers to classical music, rather than popular or folk music.

18. David Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). In regards to "art music" spreading beyond the aristocratic classes: this began to change a little with the advent of music printing, which began in 1501, but did not happen in England on a regular basis until 1588.

19. In music, the Renaissance period begins around 1450 and ends in 1600, while the Baroque period begins in 1600 and ends with the death of J.S. Bach in 1750.

ENDNOTES (cont.)

20. Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque*,
21. Dekker and Middleton, "The Roaring Girl," Act 4, Sc. 1. 84.
22. Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque*,
23. Dekker and Middleton, "The Roaring Girl," Act 4, Sc. 1. 107-9.
24. Ibid., Act 2, Sc. 1. 21.
25. Ibid., Act 4, Sc. 1. 80-1.
26. Ibid., Act 5, Sc. 2. 254-5.
27. Ibid., Act 5, Sc. 1. 363-4.
28. Ibid., Act 3, Sc. 1. 116-7.

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*Christian duty and to resolve the doubts concerning it*. London, 1696.
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# before the storm

these words spin  
just above, flirt  
with stretching minds  
and deserted lips.

they slip  
through fingers like pennies  
old, thumb-printed copper  
clacking onto damp streets

where i'm left twirling.

JILLIAN FLETCHER





# my future life of crime

LIZ REAGAN

**N**o one ever thought that his or her life would be ruined by going to college. Most people probably prepare their children for college by warning them about the allure of drugs, sex and liberalism. They do not warn them about the allure of art. I was unprepared for its enticing siren song and look where I am now. I am just another statistic amongst the masses of students who, every year, give up their dreams of one day becoming a productive member of society for the glamour that art, and its insidious criminal underbelly, offer. My life is over before it ever really starts and whom do I have to thank? The answer is William Wetmore Story and his statue "Cleopatra."

It turns out that William Wetmore Story had ties to the law as well. He was the son of Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story. He became a Harvard educated lawyer who wrote poetry, essays and sculpted amazing pieces of art in his free time. We hate him. He is a slap in the face to those of us who believe that getting out of bed in the morning is quite a feat. No really! I say underachievers of the world should unite and stamp out all of these people who think that accomplishment is normal, natural and desirable. Of course, getting together to stamp out this plague upon mankind would require some effort so, being underachievers, it will never happen, but I digress... we were speaking about Mr. Story. A real turning point in his life came after

the death of his father in 1845 when he was commissioned to create his father's monument. As if his father's death were not enough to make the poor Ivy Leaguer doubt that he had a friend in Jesus, he also became sick with typhoid. Instead of greeting these happy circumstances with the upbeat attitude that so many of the overachiever-types are cursed with, Story decided to throw caution, and his rather expensive education, to the wind by quitting the lawyer gig to become a full time bum...uh...I meant, sculptor. As a side note, I find it coincidental, or actually not coincidental at all, that he decided to leave the law at the death of his father. Now we have 1) abandonment of law career after famous and possibly overbearing father dies and 2) artistic tendencies. It does not take a genius to figure out that this individual is going to be a great artist. After all, what insures an artist's greatness like having an extremely screwed up childhood and loads of repressed emotion?

In 1856, Story and his family moved to Rome. This is significant, of course, since the form of his statues, like "Cleopatra," reflect the rabid naturalism of classic Greek and Roman statuary. However, Story sculpted in the age of Romanticism. During this period art turned away from the Greek ideal of rationality that had found its place in the Neoclassicism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There was a draw to emotion, instinct, nature, the examination/expression of individual personality, and the glorification of heroes and exemplary historical figures. While the form was influenced by a return to an earlier style of sculpture, the choice of subject and how it was rendered were wholly concepts of Romanticism.

The choice of Cleopatra as Story's subject matter was not surprising. Cleopatra as a historical figure is fascinating and to top it off she was one hot mamacita, or at least Roman military types seemed to think so. This was a woman who ruled in a male dominated society for twenty years. She ascended to the throne at the age of seventeen or eighteen by marrying her brother. Sadly this was not the last of her brothers she was to marry. (*note*: I found no evidence that she was

from south Egypt or had ever lived in a trailer park even though her marital history might indicate facts to the contrary). After her first husband/brother's "mysterious" death (wink, wink, nudge, nudge) while fleeing from Cleopatra's army, she managed to marry another brother. Coincidentally, Cleopatra outlived all of her siblings due in part to the fact that she had at least one of them killed. While running her kingdom and making nice with the family, she managed to turn the heads of Caesar and Mark Antony, and had children by both men.

History has portrayed Cleopatra as a representative of allure and female sexuality. Although she was the queen of an empire, she has been remembered more for her beauty than her booty, indicating that her desirability was in her person, not in her land (although I'm sure neither Caesar nor Antony refused either one). Contrary to her portrayal as the original pin-up girl, Cleopatra's true allure lay in her mind, not her body. She was a woman who changed history in a time when society viewed women as akin to furniture, real nice to look at, but not great for conversation. She not only survived, but also thrived for a time. Unlike the way history has portrayed Cleopatra, it is obvious that a woman cannot be just beautiful and sexy to make an impact as significant as hers. This woman was smart and she must have had a draw that was beyond her political power. To rule over a country and individual men, Cleopatra must have had a draw that made people follow her and believe in her. This was a woman who ultimately did not surrender to men, a woman who killed herself rather than be captured. This was a woman unfathomable in men's minds because men thought women neither could nor would have any impact on the world beyond the occasional birth of a great man.

Why is it that women like Cleopatra, Joan of Arc and Queen Elizabeth stand out in history? It is a testament not only to their own personal achievement, but also to society's standards and lack of expectations for women. These women stood out, not because they evidenced unique qualities uncommon to common women (any woman can tell you she could rule the world), but because there were so few

women who were afforded the opportunity to make an impact. For an artist to try and capture in a work that un-nameable quality that a woman like Cleopatra possessed is a challenge, to say the least.

There are two differing opinions about what Story's statue of Cleopatra meant to represent. In Mary Hamer's online article, "Cleopatra: An Interpretation," she states that the statue is an allegory in defense of the white man's role in slavery and sexual exploitation.<sup>1</sup> According to her, there are two pieces of evidence to prove this theory. The first is that one shoulder of Cleopatra's gown in the sculpture is falling below her breast.<sup>2</sup> Many believed that this brought attention to her torso and, in turn, her sexuality. The second is that the statue is said to be Cleopatra caught in a moment of contemplation over her failure to be able to seduce Octavian, because God knows women are devastated when they cannot get a man.<sup>3</sup> We all know that women spend most of their time prepping and scheming and calculating how they are going to trap themselves a man. Even a woman as powerful as Cleopatra was not immune to the masculine magnetism of a man in all his belching glory. In fact, the woman probably killed herself since she knew she would be deprived of his company for eternity since he refused her advances (and don't even get me started on the statistical probability that a woman throws herself at a man and gets refused. I mean, it happens, but so do miracles, just not everyday). However, the scholars of this school of thought consider this rejection an allegory for the seduction of white males by African slaves. Apparently, according to these intellectuals, these rocket-scientists, if you will, there was nothing that made an African woman any hotter for a man than being kidnapped, chained up, sold into slavery to spend the rest of her days in servitude to an old redneck with few teeth and a whole lot of body odor. Those poor white slave owners could barely keep those slaves off of them. Don't you just want to cry a river for those poor, poor men?

On the other hand, in Ingrid Rowland's article "The Nose and the Asp," William Story is portrayed as an abolitionist and as such it is believed he was trying to shed light on the plight of the noble African.<sup>4</sup> One important aspect of the positive interpretation of Africans

was in Story's depiction of Cleopatra with African features. Apparently he did not get the memo that circulated with other artists throughout history that Cleopatra, like Jesus, was one of the few Anglos in Africa and the Middle East during early civilization. There has been considerable controversy throughout history that Cleopatra has been portrayed with European features, particularly her nose. On one coin from Roman times she is portrayed with a hooknose. This feature is probably closer to the truth of Cleopatra's actual appearance than later works showing her with patrician features. Story had the zany idea to depict Cleopatra, a noble historical figure, as an indigenous person. The nerve! During the time that Story sculpted "Cleopatra," Africans were not portrayed in art as noble figures, especially in America. Society portrayed blacks as inferior and those with darker skin or more blatantly African features were seen as even less desirable than those with lighter skin or more Euro-centric features. The darker-skinned slaves were put to work in the fields and the lighter-skinned slaves were put to work in slave owners' homes. The features do not appear to be overtly African in nature, but are subtly so. The Afro-centric look of Story's "Cleopatra" is subtle and elegant because he was portraying a strong historical figure as an African at a time in history when blacks were mostly portrayed as subservient or uncivilized. Story's concentration on rendering Cleopatra as noble and African suggested to some that Africans might be capable of more than working for plantation owners. Those crazy kids with their revolutionary ideas!

As during many times of unrest, art was used by Abolitionists during the period of time prior to the Civil War as an expression of their political beliefs. They used images of blacks as noble and long-suffering to drum up support for their cause. Throughout history, art has as much tried to effect change in society, as it has to reflect change. "Cleopatra" is meant to portray Africans as dignified. Even if Cleopatra is caught in a moment of contemplating her ultimate failure, (that of being a lonely old spinster who has no man to come home to) she is still not

portrayed as weak. She is not shown as a weeping, emotional wreck of a woman (as opposed to the reality of not having a man). She sits with quiet dignity. She is arrayed in her all her finery (probably hoping to catch another man). She is wearing beautiful jewelry (probably given to her by a man). She is unashamed of her body and unconcerned with her appearance to the viewer (unless, of course, it is a man). She is self-possessed and has the air of a queen. She is not broken by her failure, by her country's imminent defeat, or by her impending death. She seems to say that she can suffer, but she cannot be broken. Her lack of clothing could be a symbol that she can be stripped and still retain her dignity. It was unheard of for many that slaves even had dignity or an identity. They were regularly abused into submission. This statue of an African woman says that human will can conquer and will subsist (i.e. maybe she will eventually get herself a man if she's really good and parades around half-naked).

There are few images that tell us what Cleopatra may have looked like in life. Most statues of her were made in Egyptian or Greek style. Both of these styles were used to convey political messages, thus cannot necessarily be viewed as naturalistic. Egyptian styles were religious and stylized. These were not "Come in; admire my beauty" statues. These were "Worship me or I'll make bad things happen to your livestock" statues. Greek styles were more naturalistic, but probably meant to make her appear more Eurocentric. Another problem with finding images of Cleopatra results from the fact that when Octavian took power, he had many images of her destroyed (now who is bitter?). Cleopatra has remained elusive throughout history in part due to our lack of knowledge about her appearance. This elusive quality has only added to her allure and her legend.

My take on the whole thing is that Story had a thing for women with issues. He sculpted another statue of the infamous "Delilah." This statue also emphasizes her sexuality as well. The statue is clothed only from the waist down. These were powerful women that he chose to portray because he admired them. He was probably fascinated by their legends and wanted to be able to see them, almost to be in their presence (with them only partially clothed, mind you). He wanted to be able to conceptualize what they were.

maybe question: What drew men to them even beyond their better judgment? What better question for a man to ask than, “what would possess the great men of history to act against their own interests in some cases?” What kind of woman could influence powerful men in this way? I think this, not because Story was said to have any interest in women’s role in history, but because of his chosen subject matter. That he chose these two women speaks volumes. They were both held power over powerful men. They both were thought to be enticing. Finally, they, like all women throughout time, led to the downfall of those powerful figures. Women have been screwing things up for men since the Garden of Eden, right?

Story’s treatment of “Cleopatra” is splendid. The statue sits in the garden court of the American Wing in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and it is amazing to behold. Story’s ability to turn cold marble into living organic material is almost beyond comprehension. One of the things that separate this statue from many others is his awareness of the physical aspects of details of his subject. There is something instinctual in the evaluation of an image. If the sculptor is skilled enough, the eye can be fooled into mistaking a material as heavy as marble for something as light as fabric. Story has that skill. He seems to understand that materials each have their own weight and fall or fold a certain way. Velvets have a different weight than cottons, cottons than muslin. It is hard to define how an object may occupy space without having that object in front of you. The dress on Story’s “Cleopatra” is amazingly lifelike. One feels as if the cloth is light and can be swept aside. The position of her body is natural. The image does not feel forced. One can even sense the texture of her skin. The feeling invoked by the mastery of the sculptor’s expertise is the first draw to the statue. In a museum the size and breadth of the Metropolitan, actually seeing and being drawn into a single artwork is a testament to the artist’s skill. One of the most important aspects of a good artist is the ability to make a viewer stop and look at the work. The message is ineffectual if it cannot be heard.

Now we get to the meat of the situation. This is the part I like to call my “future plans.” What possible future plans could I have involving this statue, you may ask. Well, since you were so kind as to inquire, I will tell you.

I am going to steal this statue. Surprised? Well, do not be! Surely you saw this coming. How many times can you expect to take a group of the poor huddled masses to an amazing place like the Metropolitan without finally driving one of them over the edge? That is right, I have been driven mad with the desire to possess this statue. (This is in no way setting up a defense for future crimes, but if you should happen to retain this report in case you are later asked to testify, I would really appreciate it.) I had very little criminal history before coming to college, just the occasional childhood thievery: a piece of candy here, a neighbor's car there. I am in no way a criminal mastermind, unless you consider someone who has a vast network of thugs and thieves who pull off various robberies and confidence schemes a criminal mastermind. In that case...no, I am still not a criminal mastermind. I am just a lowly college student who, up until now, has only taken money from "The Man" to fund my adventures in education. Now all of that has changed thanks to my visit to the museum. I do not really have a plan yet. I was thinking about taking my "big purse" into the museum next time I go or perhaps wearing some really loose clothes. Do you think I could slip it under my jacket? Would that be too obvious? Perhaps I will just report it stolen and see if the police will return it to me. Okay! I do not exactly have a plan yet, but I am working on it! In the mean time, should the statue of Cleopatra disappear, you know nothing. Capice?







William Wetmore Story  
"Cleopatra"  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
New York City



## ENDNOTES

1. Mary Hamer, "Cleopatra: An Interpretation," <[http://www.africana.com/research/encarta/tt\\_341.asp](http://www.africana.com/research/encarta/tt_341.asp)> (May 30, 2003).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ingrid D. Rowland, "The Nose and the Asp," April 4, 2002 <[http://www.powells.com/review/2002\\_04\\_04.html](http://www.powells.com/review/2002_04_04.html)> (May 30, 2003).

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## *A word from the publisher*

*The authority of those who teach is often an obstacle to those who want to learn.*

—Cicero

*It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.*

—Albert Einstein

*Believe nothing, O monks, merely because you have been told it... or because it is traditional, or because you yourselves have imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings—that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide.*

—Gautama Buddha

Most of us can remember the early days of our schooling as being a time of excitement during which we experienced sheer joy in the privilege of learning how the world works. Learning what things were called, for example; learning that there was such an entity called an alphabet and that certain letters of that alphabet arranged in very particular ways meant very particular things—“cow” or “horse” or “building” or, miracle of miracles, one’s own name. And these strange molecular structures of letters not only played in silence on the page but themselves represented sounds that,

when themselves grouped in such a way, scored the music that called the things exactly what they were. As if that weren't enough, when such groupings themselves were arranged in coagulations of phrases and sentences, the miracle of image could be launched into action, perhaps into story itself, and our imagination fed upon the fare. If, during the time of these discoveries, we were guided by wise teachers who knew how to excite our curiosity, and knew how to direct it toward learning, then justice was done to the awe and wonder of the world so natural to childhood.

When was it in our education that this wonder and awe were challenged to near irrelevance? When were they pushed aside to make room for the "important" things? When were we told to "shape up" and focus on the "real" goals, such as acing exams, and excelling in standardized tests? When was it we were lured away from our awe into darker intellectual and emotional weather engendered by the inculcation that we need to hunker down and get to work purchasing credentials for a "good job"—that is, one that pays well? When was it that we began to learn that in that job it is wise to labor to please superiors with hard work, all the while careful not to rock the boat, ruffle feathers, upset the wrong people as we work our way "up" the ladder, amassing more power and money so as to be able to acquire goods that demonstrate our success to a world that, ironically, becomes more distant to us in the process?

On our way we are told that there is no time anymore for the "childish" qualities such as wonder, vulnerability, imagination. The result, if we "succeed," is physical comfort in an anxiety-ridden utilitarian world. As a friend of mine—a fellow teacher—once told me, without these encouragements toward wonder, school is nothing more than a Dickensian workhouse. Sadly, there are many Dickensian workhouses out there—elementary and middle and high schools, and, yes, colleges too, whose noble but misguided aim too often is to "prepare us for the world we live in," at the expense, rather than in the facilitation, of readying us to change it for the better.

The work in this issue brings these thoughts to mind not as evidence of the triumph of such misguidance but in celebration of intellectual and emotional verve born of curiosity and energized by wonder. From the excerpt of Laura Walter's haunting novel-in-progress, *Developing Olivia*, to Liz Reagan's meditations on a statue in "My Future Life of Crime," and the twenty three works of prose and poetry and art in between, we witness work that is as brave as it is smart, work that wants so much more than to "make a name" or lengthen a resume, or coddle an ego, and the way in which we all profit from reading it has little to do with the world's idea of success and everything to do with life.

Robert Mooney

Publisher, *Washington College Review*

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## *contributors*

HEIDI ATWOOD '04 is a double major in English and Philosophy. She would like to work in the small press industry and publish poets who might otherwise be overlooked. She would like to thank Professor Bob Day for helping her revise her poems. She would also like to thank Professor Anderson whose classes convinced her to become a philosophy major.

SHEILA AUSTRIAN graduated *summa cum laude* in 2003 with a degree in history. Her senior thesis dealt with New Deal youth programs and her Sophie Kerr entry was an adventure novel set in the Middle East. Sheila now lives on a farm outside Chestertown. This article is a slightly shortened version of a paper prepared for Dr. McColl's always exciting The Arts in America course.

HEATHER ANN BLAIN, class of 2005, is an Anthropology major and a Creative Writing minor. She has, at any one time, 15-20 post-it notes stuck on her wall. Her heroes are Oscar Wilde and Margaret Meade, with the guys who wrote *Rocket's Thesaurus* coming in a close second.

MICHAEL CADES is a native of Kent County, Maryland. He spent his formative years in the Kent County Public School system. After his freshman year at Kent County High School, he transferred to Westtown, a Quaker school just outside of West Chester, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Westtown, Michael Cades attended Guilford College in North Carolina. In January of 2000 he transferred to Washington

College, where he began focusing upon Music and English. He would like to thank Washington College for allowing him the opportunity to be involved in this publication.

COLLEEN M. COSTELLO, from Exeter, Rhode Island, plans to graduate in 2004 with a double major in Political Science and Philosophy, and a minor in Art. She plans to study Human Rights law and International law in, well, law school. She is active in the Student Government Association, Amnesty International, Society of Junior Fellows, Student Events Board, among other things. In her oh-so-abundant free time, she enjoys frothy cups of vanilla chai tea, sunbathing, tending to her banana tree, and anything light blue. When she was a wee lass, she wanted to be a hot air balloon operator. Perhaps she still does...

JILLIAN FLETCHER is a class of 2003 Drama major with minors in English and French. She exits Washington College an enriched version of herself who is deeply aware of and thankful for the opening and constantly shifting experience with which her four years on this campus have provided her. She comes to Chestertown from New York and the never constricting arms of a family who are a bountiful source of revelation. She'd like to thank the *Washington College Review* for presenting her an opportunity to finish a poem by a deadline. Jillian hopes to pursue poetry alongside directing in the future and wishes and strives for peace.

CHRISTINA GRANBERG '03 is a graduating senior from Olympia, Washington. Her work earned the Lynette Nielsen Art Award for excellence in art. Photographing in a different cultural setting and working to create a portfolio of her own documentary photography was undeniably the greatest step yet toward a career she bargained for. She developed a confidence in her ability to photograph while experiencing a culture outside her own, while falling in love with the

intimacy that the documentary style requires. Such an opportunity to explore a future with her interest in photography was possible only through the financial assistance of the Cater Society of Junior Fellows. As she continues to explore and pursue photography she will always remain indebted to the individuals at Washington College who have inspired and supported her in taking these final steps.

JENNIFER HARTMAN graduated in 2003 with majors in English and Gender Studies and a minor in Mathematics. The selection published in the *Review* is drawn from Jennifer's thesis on mathematician, political activist, and writer Sofia Kovalevskaja. Jennifer's thesis is a small testament to her love for literature, mathematics, and the connections between the two, and she hopes that all young girls and women will one day be encouraged to study mathematics. She would like to thank Louise Amick and Gerry Fisher for their invaluable help and guidance.

AMANDA HEMPEL will graduate in 2005 with a major in English and a minor in Creative Writing. She plans to pursue an MFA in writing after she leaves WAC. The unsuspecting graduate school has not been selected yet. Amanda would like to thank two people; Professor Murphy for seeing the potential in *In Taos*, and her roommate, Caryn Thomas, for putting up with her irritability when she is writing.

JENNY HOFFMAN, a member of the class of 2003, is an Anthropology and Humanities double major. Through her studies, Jenny has developed a profound appreciation for linguistics, art, and writing. Jenny is also a member of several honor societies, including the National Anthropology honor society (Lamba Alpha) and the National Leadership honor society (Omicron Delta Kappa). She is also editor-in-chief of *The Witness*, Washington College's Christian newsletter, and the vice-president and co-founder of the Art History club. This article

is a portion of the author's senior thesis. The complete work, entitled, "Sa'a Naqhai Bik'e Hozho: The Navajo Worldview as Reflected in Language, Art, and Poetry" covers not only language, as evidenced here, but also explores the principles of the Navajo worldview in regards to their art and their poetry.

CHARLES A. HOHMAN is currently a sophomore at Washington College. He originally hails from Havre de Grace, MD and is a proud graduate of Havre de Grace High School. Hohman is majoring in American Studies and hopes at some point to become a college professor in that field.

MICHELLE HOUSE is a senior Art and Biology major from Frederick, MD. "Kasey" is a gelatin silver print taken for the Introduction to Photography class I took Fall 2002. The photograph captures a moment of a child's everyday life that may often be overlooked, but is still priceless. I love photographing children because of their innocence and love for life that has not yet been tainted by the harsh reality of the world that surrounds them.

FLORIN IVAN is from Timisoara, Romania, and he would be burnt ashes without his friends who never let the fire in him die. People such as they interest him, for those are the mad ones who never say a commonplace thing. They never yawn, but are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time. They burn like fabulous candles in their metal holders, spreading their sparks like spider webs across the stars and in the middle you see the centerlight explode and every body goes "Ahhhh." His life's motto is taken from E.B. White: *There is a period near the beginning of every man's life when he has little to cling to except his unmanageable dream, little to support except good health, and nowhere to go but all over the place.*

NATE JONES is a sophomore from southern Maine who enjoys writing prose and the occasional academic essay.

JAMIE LANG is a senior at Washington College and will earn her degree in English as well as minors in both Creative Writing and Gender Studies. She is very grateful her piece was chosen for the *Washington College Review*. She thanks the English professors at Washington College who have helped guide her as a student and writer, especially Professor Mooney and visiting professor Adam Goodheart. She gives thanks to those dearest to her, those who instilled within her a sense of home, a sense of belonging—of community, of self. Without these influences she would never have been able to write this piece: a part of our history that is still resounding and is yet to be revealed.

JOSHUA LEWIS is a senior and majoring in English with a Creative Writing minor. He comes from Port Republic, Maryland. Some of his hobbies include reading the works of William Faulkner and weightlifting; he is part of the Writers' Union and Writers' Theater. His personal motto as a writer has been less is more, discovering that which is not being said is more important than what is being said. He thanks the people close to him—they are truly his inspiration.

LEAH LITTLEFIELD is a rising senior at Washington College. She grew up in Bowie, MD where she played soccer, basketball and softball until she came to Washington. She is a Sociology major with a Political Science minor, and she plans to go on to graduate school with a concentration in Counseling. She is also engaged and will be married next August, after she graduates. The car accident in her story happened in December of 2000, during the Christmas break of her freshman year at Washington College. She missed the second semester, but after taking numerous summer school classes she will graduate on time with her class next spring.

RACHEL MAURO is a rising sophomore at Washington. She's been writing poetry since the 8th grade, ever since she found a classmate who wrote on equally as melancholy themes, but she likes to think that she's branched out a bit in her subject matter to include angst and enraged. She plans to declare her major shortly upon arriving back to school—English and, of course, a minor in creative writing, because if she doesn't get a writing fix, she's likely to have a melancholy, angst, enraged breakdown, and she doesn't want to subject the school she loves so much to that.

HONOR McELROY grew up in Salisbury, Maryland. She is an English major with a minor in Creative Writing. She transferred to Washington last year from Guilford College in Greensboro, NC. She is currently completing a creative writing portfolio that consists of nearly 50 poems in various forms, meters, and subject areas. Many of her poems are influenced by a four and half month trip in which she traveled most of Western Europe; they are also tied closely to the landscape of the Eastern Shore. She plans to join the Peace Corps after she graduates.

ROBYN NUTTALL is a sophomore at Washington College this upcoming year, and she will be declaring a psychology major this fall as well. Despite her love for psychology, art and photography are her most beloved hobbies. She started taking photo classes her junior year at Loch Raven high-school and she's always been an artist on the side. She played many sports in school and was involved in a good amount of clubs. Unfortunately, now she finds less time to take photos and complete her artwork, sometimes struggling to find time to actually get in a car and drive to interesting sites. A lack of dark room diminishes her opportunities to enhance her passion, but when she's home, she finds every opportunity to go back and using her high school's dark room.



CAITLIN PATTON, class of 2005, likes a challenge. She complicates her life by double majoring in English and Music and minoring in Creative Writing. She teaches horseback riding and trains horses, and is also the founder and president of the Washington College Equestrian Team. If not in class, on a horse, or writing, she is probably conversing with her violin. She would like to thank Dr. Kathryn Moncrief for giving her a love of renaissance drama. She would also like to say that Bach, books and randomness are the good things in life.

LIZ REAGAN is from Florida. She will be graduating in 2005. She plans to set the world on fire, if not with her intellect than definitely with matches.

WILLIAM SMILEY is delighted to once again be featured in the *Review*, this time demonstrating what one might call the more perverse elements of his character; namely, he is just tickled that the final segment of his paper draws the whole work together through sex. Although everyone believes he is an English major, William is in fact majoring in Anthropology, with a minor in Philosophy.

LAURA MAYLENE WALTER graduated *summa cum laude* with departmental honors in May 2003 with an English major and Creative Writing minor. She was awarded the Sophie Kerr Prize, given each year since 1968 to the graduating senior who shows "The greatest ability and promise for future fulfillment in the field of literary endeavor." This is her fourth year of publication in the *Washington College Review*. She owes Professor Mooney many thanks for his insight and revision suggestions for her novel *Developing Olivia*. After graduation, Laura will move to a new city, work on her novel, travel, and continue growing up.

COLOPHON

This issue of the *Washington College Review* was designed and produced using Adobe Pagemaker and Photoshop software with iMac computers. The text is set in Bembo, heads are set in Purloin with special characters in Bickham Script Ornaments and Linotype Zapfino Ornaments.

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